





The Hamlyn History
of the World in Colour
Volume Four

AND THE ANCIENT EAST



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BYZANTIUM AND THE ANCIENT EAST

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Introduction

By MICHAEL GOUGH

It is often taken for granted and sometimes, apparently, unrecognised that what is of most lasting value in western civilisation was held in trust for a millennium by a power that was anything but 'western' in the accepted sense of the term. Indeed, the Byzantine Empire which died, not without honour and an hour of final grandeur, in 1453, was a composite state with the flexibility and self-confidence to adapt its heritage of Greco-Roman culture to the needs of a Levantine environment. That was the source of its often renewed vitality, and in its time it represented the most fruitful synthesis that the world had seen of the divergent traditions of east and west.

Founded on the Bosphorus in A.D. 330 on the site of the old Greek colony of Byzantium, Constantinople had three main advantages. Politically this new Rome was heir to the old city of the Caesars with its genius for orderly administration. Spiritually it was inspired by Christianity, a faith characteristically Semitic in its combination of sensitivity with a stern moral code. Finally, Constantinople was ideally situated both for the maintenance of contact with Europe and for the development of relations (often troubled but somehow profitable) with Asian neighbours. These the Roman of the old order may have respected as enemies, but not as fellow-citizens in Rome itself.

Greek gradually took the place of Latin as the language of the Byzantine court as well as of the provinces. Old Rome under the waning power of the western emperors and the growing authority of the Papacy became increasingly irrelevant except as a symbol of the ancient order in a barbarised Europe. Commercial and cultural ties with Asia became closer. All these factors altered the character of Byzantine autocracy.

As God's earthly representative, the emperor of Byzantium lived in appropriate material splendour. The Orthodox Church, as interpreter of the emperor's will, was usually a pliant instrument of state policy. Thus, in the hour of decision, with the Turk at the walls of Constantinople, the Church found submission to the young sultan. Mehmet II, politically more expedient than the acknowledgement of the authority of the pope at Rome. Indeed, despite the fact that the Roman pontiff's triple crown symbolised spiritual rather than temporal power, he demanded a submission no less absolute.

It is true that Latin allies, the Venetians, manned the ramparts alongside the meagre Byzantine garrison during the last agonising siege, but in the fifteenth century Venice was a Levantine, rather than a true western power. Trade interests played the leading role in its wish to keep the old empire alive,

and one may doubt whether the saving of Byzantium's collective soul was in the Venetian reckoning.

Venice still has power to evoke the shades of a long vanished Byzantium, and in the streets of Pera in Istanbul the ghosts of Genoese and Venetians still walk. Yet, they are really irrelevant. In Anatolia, once the heartland of the Byzantine Empire as it is now of modern Turkey, the traveller may, with his back to the setting sun, look eastwards in imagination across Asia as far as the Yellow Sea, half a world away. The fourth volume of this series, which links Byzantium with the Ancient East, is concerned with that undeniable, physical fact.

Byzantine links with the east were natural ones. Both geography and history saw to that. At an earlier time, the very ease of communication within the Roman Empire of the West imposed on it a certain rigidity. On the isthmus formed by the rivers Forth and Clyde, on the banks of the Danube or the Rhine, a man might know that he had reached a limit, beyond which were the lands of the barbarians. It was quite otherwise in Asia, where caravan routes took little heed of political frontiers or natural barriers. There a merchant from Constantinople might expect to find, far from home, fellow traders with roots in civilisation as deep, or deeper than his own, for all the differences in language, religion, traditions and manners.

Nowhere was this truer than in Persia. As Dr Bryer so pertinently writes of its people:

Greece, Rome and Byzantium were their only cultural peers. It was a case of mutual fascination. These obsessive enemies learnt more from each other (particularly in administrative devices and forms of faith) than they cared to admit.'

Thus, the Persian concept of a quasi-divine monarchy was of much longer standing than that of Byzantium. Moreover, in purely religious matters the Magi (the Persian priestly caste) played much the same role as did the Orthodox priests, as keepers of the king's conscience, which happily so often coincided with their own.

The rise of Islam rapidly changed the balance of power between Byzantium and its neighbours. Between 661 and 750, under the Umayyad caliphs of Damascus, the champions of the religion founded by Mohammed broke out from the Hejaz, occupied the whole coast of North Africa as far west as Morocco, and then turned northwards into Spain. Another spearhead of the Muslim armies moved into Syria and Asia Minor with Constantinople as the ultimate objective. Had that city fallen to the Arabs

in the siege of 717-718, the course of European history would have been altered. But it was there and in northern Spain, at the two extremities of Mediterranean Christendom, that Islam was first checked and then contained. Not for seven centuries were the last of the Moors expelled from Spain, and, after the same long interval, it was the Ottoman Turks, not the Arabs, who finally put an end to the Empire of Byzantium.

As time went on, the character of the Muslim caliphate changed. The new Abbasid dynasty at Baghdad gave due weight to Arab susceptibilities by sustaining Arabic as the official language in its territories and imposing Koranic law on public life. At the same time it allowed to established states like Persia a measure of local autonomy. Ultimate loyalty was to the caliph, a figure who became by degrees as politically and socially remote as a Byzantine emperor or a Persian king of kings. Under the Abbasids, Arab scholarship led the world, and in the tenth century a patriarch of Constantinople could declare without exaggeration: 'Two sovereignties—the Muslim and the Byzantine—surpass all sovereignty on earth, like two great lights in the firmament.'

The co-existence of these brilliant rivals was not peaceful, but their antagonism was enlightened by a genuine mutual respect. Eastern Asia Minor in those days was a no-man's-land disputed by Christian and Muslim frontiersmen who raided each other's territory more out of habit than necessity. This almost traditional state of affairs was, however, upset by an expansionist Byzantine emperor, Basil II, who annexed the uplands of eastern Anatolia and forced the native Armenians to accept Byzantine 'protection'. It was a sullen, cowed, and unco-operative people that he left behind him, and within half a century Basil's frontier had been breached beyond repair by the Seljuk Turks under their warrior leader Alp Arslan.

From the earliest period of the Abbasid caliphate Turkish tribes had been moving south-westwards from their homeland in central Asia. Like the Mongols later, they were nomad herdsmen. Their natural mobility made them elusive enemies and hard to defeat, for they fought from the saddle as archers. The sons of Seljuk were among the most gifted of these warriors, and, as they embraced Islam with all the fanaticism of the newly converted, they were enrolled in the caliph's armies.

Here their freshness, military ability and endurance soon made them an independent political force in the Muslim world. Already, by 1055, their leader, Tughrul Bey, had conquered Persia and had been proclaimed

sultan by the Abbasid caliph at Baghdad. However, although his nephew and successor, Alpaslan, carried out frequent harassing raids against Byzantine territory, his aim was not permanent conquest of Asia Minor, but rather the neutralisation of his right flank in a campaign southwards against the Fatimids of Egypt.

The outcome of the Battle of Manzikert in 1071, with the total defeat of the Byzantine forces and the capture of their emperor, Romanus Diogenes, was as fortuitous as it was deserved. Each side miscalculated the other's intentions, but Byzantium made the greater mistake by relying, in a hostile territory like Armenia, on a host of mercenaries, amongst whom were Turks whose loyalty could not stand the test of war against their fellow-countrymen. The subsequent advance of the Seljuks into Asia Minor and the establishment of the Sultanate of Rum provides a rare example of a conqueror's capacity to assimilate the conquered to its own culture without resort to brutality or coercion.

The change from Byzantine to Seljuk rule, from a Christian to a predominantly Muslim society, seems to have caused so little contemporary stir that it may be assumed to have been a relatively peaceful and painless process. The later struggle of the Byzantine Empire against the Ottoman Turks was a more bitter affair.

The Byzantines were in constant touch with Persians, Arabs and Turks and, after their own fashion, understood and were understood by them. However, with India, China and the Far East, Byzantium had the most tenuous and indirect relations. It was only through trade in luxuries that any connection existed at all. Silk, a Chinese monopoly in the time of the Roman Empire, was manufactured during the Middle Ages at Byzantium and in Sicily, so that only the most delicate and costly work was imported from the Far East. However, spices to make meat more palatable, and purges to dissipate the ill effects of unhealthy eating were always in demand, and most of this trade was in Arab hands. The distances involved were vast and the hazards of travel such that it needed a unified political control in Asia to make trade between the two halves of the world reasonably simple. Such control came with the establishment of the Mongol Empire, and, in particular, with the capture in 1258 of the Abbasid capital at Baghdad.

The Mongol Empire was at first a mushroom growth. Under their first great leader, Genghis Khan, the tribes united. In twenty-one years (between 1202 and 1222) they extended their power from their own homeland to the Yellow Sea in the east, and to the shores of the Black Sea in the west. As if that were not enough, within another twenty years the Golden Horde was master of Russia and, a little later in the century, was to make two attempts—both abortive

it is true—at a sea-borne invasion of Japan. This group of restless nomad tribes was a curious people to inherit so great an extent of the earth's surface. That it could do so was due to internal discipline based on a sense of common national origin, familiarity in daily life with hardship and privation, and superb skill in mobile warfare.

As the known enemies of the Muslim powers, the Mongols became the subject of much wishful thinking on the part of Christian Europe. Thus England and France could envisage a Mongol-crusader alliance, and Pope Innocent III actually suggested baptism to the Great Khan himself—a proposal that met with a dusty answer. Christians there certainly were among the Mongol tribes, but their capacity to influence events in favour of their separated brethren in the west was greatly over-estimated.

Although the Mongol Empire had no lasting influence on relations between Christendom and Islam, it did reopen direct mercantile contact between Europe, the Levant and the Far East. Italian merchants in particular were quick to seize this new opportunity to trade at the source, and such men as Marco Polo were able to bring to Europe first-hand accounts of the distant lands subject to the Great Khan. Priests too made the long and arduous journey, and in 1307 an Italian was enthroned as the first archbishop of Peking.

The traffic was not all eastbound, and, towards the end of the thirteenth century, Rabban Sauma, a Nestorian monk from northern China, set out in the opposite direction, bound for Jerusalem on pilgrimage. He never attained his real goal, but did reach England.

The decline of the Mongol Empire after the death of Timur in 1406, the fall of Constantinople in 1453 and the disappearance of Italian merchant posts on the Black Sea coast soon after meant the end of this vast trading area.

The chapters that follow cover so immense a geographical area and a period of time so long that it seems hard to establish any sort of relationship between isolated events at the perimeter. This introduction attempts to do so by using the history and fate of the Byzantine Empire as a yardstick.

Although its physical existence ended more than 500 years ago, Byzantium remains today the best interpreter to the west of the ancient and medieval scene in Asia. Constantinople itself was truly cosmopolitan and in its streets and markets Arabs, Persians, Turks, Jews, Armenians and even Indians were a familiar sight. The great city stood at the meeting point of two continents and to some extent understood them both. Neither was a friend. From Asia Constantinople knew honest hostility, from Christian Europe it experienced treachery and injustice. Thus, when the end came, it was accepted with melancholy resignation.



The Byzantium Empire

Justinian's great achievements; Byzantium's chief interests—theology and chariot racing; in a violent age men find peace in the monastery; a new state emerges from the struggle with Islam; the Mongol Empire burns itself out; at last the Turks enter Constantinople.

The New Rome

What we now call the Byzantine Empire was regarded by its peoples as the continuing Roman Empire, its rulers following in unbroken sequence from the first Caesars. From Rome Byzantium inherited its political claim to rule the world, the origins of its pervasive bureaucracy and formidable military system, and even what passed for a Roman Senate. The reconquering of old Rome and the west was to be a recurring dream for eight centuries.

However, Byzantium differed from the empire of the past in two fundamental respects. First, it ruled only part of the Mediterranean world—the more prosperous and vigorous eastern half. Here great cities and an advanced economy flourished while

urban life decayed in the west. Byzantium's neighbours and enemies were not illiterate barbarians such as overran the west, but Sassanian Persia and, later, the Muslim caliphate, which could only enhance Byzantine culture.

Secondly, when Constantine the Great inaugurated Constantinople as New Rome in A.D. 330, he adopted the most lively of the Eastern faiths, Christianity, giving his successors a unique position as regulators of Orthodoxy and 'equals of the apostles'. The liturgy of state was enacted in the slow ceremonies of the Sacred Palace. 'By such means', explained one emperor, 'we shadow the harmonious movement of God the Creator around the universe, while the imperial power is preserved in proportion and order'.

Justinian, reconqueror of the West

Justinian (527–565) established the outlook of the early Byzantine state. He is best remembered as a lawgiver and for his creation of a single astonishing building, the church of the Hagia Sophia. The jurist Tribonian's ponderous codification of Roman law and the emperor's own decrees were the

Above: Christ Pantocrator. This representation usually occupies the central dome or main apse of Byzantine churches. The awesome figure of Christ Almighty is a more Eastern concept than the suffering mortal of late Western churches. Twelfth-century mosaic. (Daphni, Greece.)



foundation of the Byzantine legal system. They preserved a priceless Roman heritage which was not to be reintroduced to the west until the twelfth century.

Justinian built churches in all parts of his empire as an imperial obligation. But the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople was his singular experiment in imperial magnificence. A vast shallow dome is suspended over semi-domes, reaching down to a great pillared basilica, whose walls are encased in polychrome marbles. It formed part of the administrative complex in the capital which included the rambling Sacred Palace and the Hippodrome with its classical statuary, Egyptian obelisks and royal box.

The chariot races at the Hippodrome were the focal point of the life of the city's vast populace and chariot racing came near to becoming a political system. The various teams, each with their earnest cheerleaders, even reflected the theological divisions of the empire. Here also the common people exercised their sole right: that of acclaiming the emperor with rhythmical greetings or, very occasionally, of lynching him (as was nearly the case with Justinian in 532).

Justinian's ambition was nothing less than the reconquest of the west. After securing the Persian frontier two brilliant generals

Belisarius and Narses, reclaimed North Africa from the Vandals, all Italy from the Ostrogoths and even parts of Spain. It seemed as if the Roman Empire was a reality once more.

However, the cost to Byzantium of the interminable campaigns was enormous. All sources of manpower were exploited, including hired, semi-private armies and foreign auxiliaries. In any case, most of the conquered territories had been ravaged too long and their peoples proved apathetic towards the 'liberators'. Except for Greek southern Italy the recovered lands were lost for good within a century. Even contemporaries condemned Justinian for ruining the empire by his expensive victories.

Everyday life

Constantinople was by far the largest of all medieval European cities. Its sheer size never ceased to amaze visitors from western Europe and its display of wealth (especially in Christian relics) made it 'the city of the world's desire'.

Twelve miles of land and sea walls enclosed six arcaded forums, an aqueduct which fed the cisterns, scores of domed churches, palaces and monasteries, a covered

bazaar and market gardens. Its streets were adorned with sculptures looted from the Hellenistic east.

It was an industrial centre. Prices, trading contracts and gilds were controlled by the prefect of the city. Silk was an imperial monopoly and the dyeing and weaving workshops were installed in part of the maze of courtyards, pavilions and offices which made up the Sacred Palace.

Trading ships from the Crimea, Beirut, Alexandria and Venice assembled in the Golden Horn. However, Byzantine merchants, faced with high tariffs and an inefficient credit system, tended to leave the transit trade of the capital to foreigners (Arabs and later Italians). Land was a safer investment.

At one time the population of Constantinople may have reached 1,000,000. Since the price of corn could double every fifty miles on the atrocious roads, feeding such numbers presented formidable problems. Before the Arab invasions corn was shipped from Egypt and Sicily. The Crimean cornfields also contributed, and cattle ranches and sheepruns were developed in Anatolia.

Even in a city such as Constantinople the country was not far away and many citizens were, in fact, farmers. Illuminated manuscripts of the 'Labours of the Months' show



Above left: the emperor Justinian, accompanied by ecclesiastical dignitaries, high officials and guards. Byzantine emperors were called hagioi ('holy') and were always depicted with halos. On Justinian's left is Archbishop Maximian, who is holding a jewelled cross, and the man standing behind him is thought to be Julianus, a wealthy banker.

Above right: the empress Theodora, the wife of Justinian, and her retinue. For twenty years she exercised great influence on her husband and on the history of Byzantium. She is shown here wearing a diadem from which are suspended huge clusters of pearls. Mosaics. Sixth century A.D. (Church of San Vitale, Ravenna.)

the vintage in September (when the Byzantine year began), coursing in October, ploughing with a heavy wooden two-ox plough in November, collecting firewood in December, opening the wine jars in January, feasting in February and harvesting with a sickle (the western scythe was not popular) in July. Oxen moving endlessly round the threshing floor, winnowing with beautiful wooden forks and milling by hand or by horizontal water-driven wheels, completed the annual cycle of rural life.

Oil and wine ran from rock-cut presses. Night fishermen lured the anchovies and mackerel of the Marmora and Black Seas into their nets by lamplight. Pastoralists took their herds and flocks to the upland summer grazing grounds in the Balkans and the central plateau of Anatolia, sometimes moving their encampments hundreds of miles in the year. Vlach shepherds came into Constantinople to sell their salty, white goats-milk cheese. Even town-dwellers retired to summer hill stations, away from the hot, plague-ridden cities.

Much has been made of the independence of the free communes of Byzantine peasants who, answerable only to the state, were the supposed backbone of the rather ineffectual provincial levies. In fact, they were never

particularly free, though, even with the rise of great feudal landowners in the last centuries of the empire, they always enjoyed a greater independence than did their counterparts in western Europe. Their way of life can be glimpsed today in the country districts of the Balkans and Turkey, where oxen still circle round the threshing floors and entire shepherd villages leave for the mountains when the snows melt.

The Byzantine Church

The 'Universal Empire' and the 'Universal Church' were coeval: the one represented the other. Conversion to Orthodoxy was the first step in submission to the imperial system, for the emperor was Christ's political representative on earth. Only through heresy were the minorities of the east able to establish their national separatism and escape the imperial tax-collector. For Orthodox and heterodox alike their faith was a way of life and there was little distinction between religious and secular matters.

In the Eastern Churches authority rested on a consensus of the entire community of believers. These had been baptised in their thousands during the fourth and fifth centuries when Christianity was established

Scenes from everyday life in Byzantium.
Left: a masked beekeeper smokes out a swarm. Until the introduction of cane sugar, honey was the most widely used sweetening agent.

Right: acorns are knocked down for pigs.
Bottom left: in the Aegean Sea Byzantine fishermen use flares to attract shoals of fish by night. Byzantine manuscripts. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)



as the state religion, until the terms 'Roman' (i.e. Greek) and 'Christian' (i.e. Orthodox) became practically synonymous.

The nature of Christ's divinity was defined in seven general councils of the faithful, represented by their bishops and state officials. The ecclesiastical hierarchies were headed by five patriarchs: of Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem. But whereas the senior pope (or 'father') of Rome became the sole interpreter of faith and order in the Western Church, the Eastern Orthodox never lost the view that the Church was 'Universal' because it incorporated all Christians, worshipping in their own languages and styles. It is this diffuse eastern, as opposed to the centralised western, view of authority which lies at the heart of the schism which was slowly recognised to exist between the two halves of Christianity.

The differences were aggravated by mutual misunderstandings and mistrust after the crusaders met Byzantines face to

face. From the eleventh century the question of union of the two Churches was for the Papacy largely a matter of discipline, whereas for the Byzantine his very identity was at stake. Dogmatic distinctions were merely points of argument.

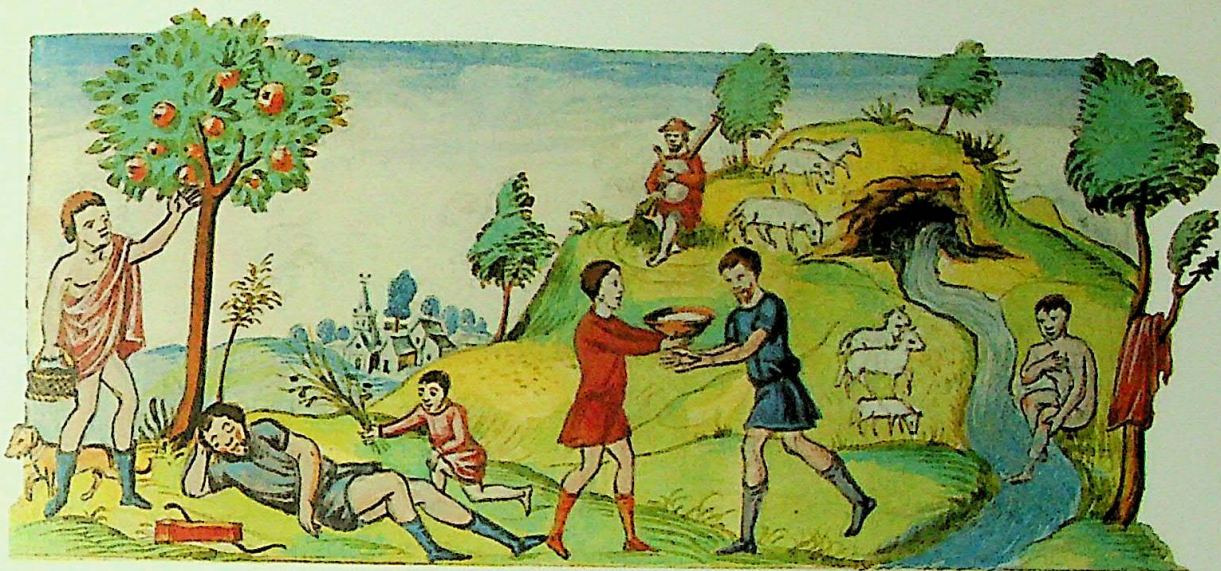
Monastic life

In the fourth century St Basil, the great pastoral theologian of the Orthodox Church, established a tradition of communal contemplative life. Soon almost every country district could look to a monastery, dispenser of the strongly-felt Byzantine virtue of philanthropy. Some monasteries gathered the Holy Sepulchre on Calvary, some round of St Symeon the stylite, but most arose from the spiritual needs of individuals and attracted local endowments later.

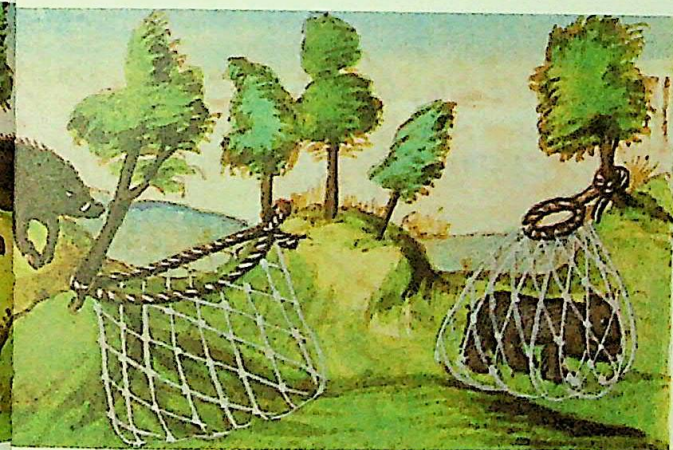
Byzantine monks were pious and partisan, and they took their violent political

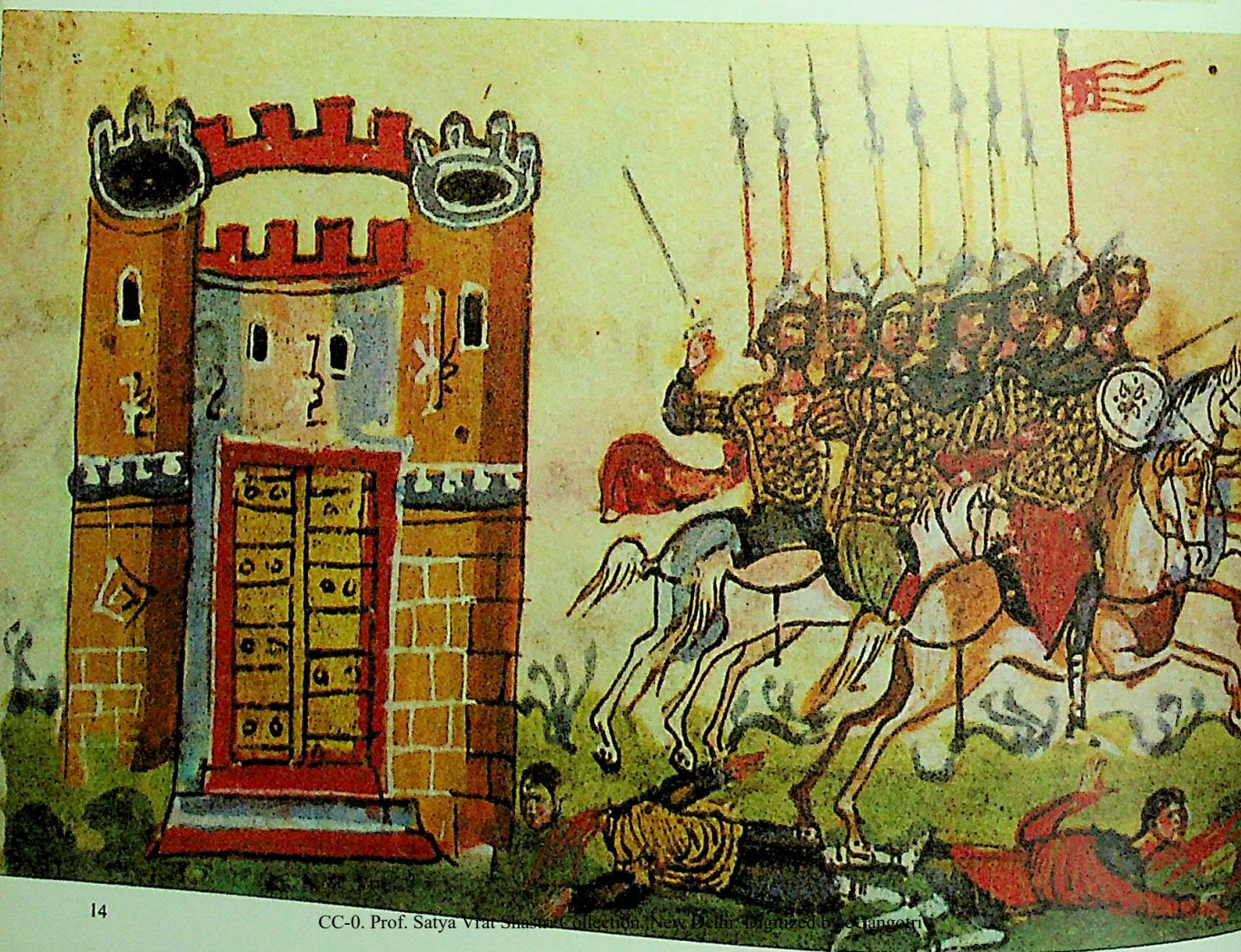
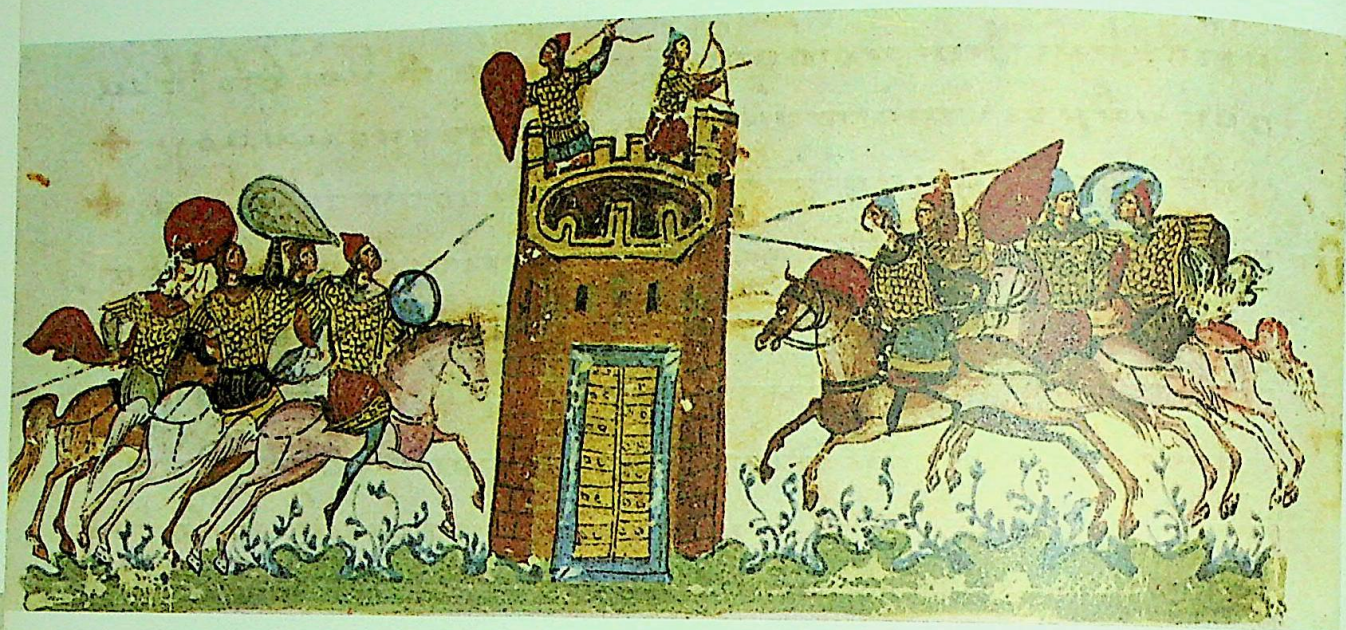
theological struggles into the streets. While parish priests were usually married peasants, bishops had to be celibate and were therefore appointed from the ranks of the unmarried clergy and the monastic orders. Lands given to monasteries (often by pious widows) were inalienable. It has been estimated that by the last centuries of the empire the monasteries owned one-third of the finest arable land. They were largely exempt from taxation and (through a persistent tradition of pacifism) reluctant to supply military manpower.

By the twelfth century the dramatic secular liturgy was being superseded in the cathedrals by the recitation of monastic devotions, as the hold of the monasteries over the Church tightened. During the last desperate centuries of Byzantium the spiritual life became increasingly attractive. While the Turk encircled Constantinople, the monastic retreats of Patmos, Bithynian Olympos, Athos and the Meteora flourished.



Above: a pastoral scene. While the huntsman rests, apples are picked and the shepherd plays his bagpipes. Centre and below: bears caused havoc in vineyards and among standing crops. They could be netted or shot. Note the way in which vines are trained up trees (usually olive trees). The black wine of Byzantium was popular in the West. Byzantine manuscripts. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)





Byzantine learning

The University of Constantinople taught a course in ancient philosophy, rhetoric, natural sciences and theology. Its textbooks were largely compiled by Alexandrian schoolmasters in the first century A.D., and set texts were chosen with little originality. Nonetheless, educated Byzantines (and the literacy rate was much higher than in the west) knew their Bible and spiritual handbooks, such as writings of St John of the Ladder, as well as their Plato. This combination of classical humanism and eastern mysticism is illustrated by both Byzantine scholarship and art, but it never developed, as in the Italian Renaissance, into a struggle between medieval scholasticism and a revival of the values of pagan antiquity.

In Byzantium humanism and Christianity were two facets of the same living tradition—no revival was needed. The clue to the continuity of this dual culture lies in a long

adherence to the language and style of ancient Greece. The Fathers of the Church wrote in the same language as had the ancient philosophers. Even in the fourteenth century the emperor, John Kantakouzenos, could incorporate in his memoirs without any change of style Thucydides' description of the plague at Athens, when he was at a loss for words to describe the Black Death. Bishops, like Eustathios of Salonika, found nothing contradictory in writing a commentary on Homer as well as pastoral sermons.

Through the accidental survival of libraries almost every ancient Greek text known to us today comes through a Byzantine copyist—usually a monk. We glimpse the literature of classical Greece through the eyes of Byzantine scholars, with their comments and interpretations. It is true that they were rarely original, but here, as in so many fields, Byzantium preserved, interpreted and gave a new life to the past.

Under many guises the Byzantine army followed the old Roman division between a central corps and provincial levies. Foreign mercenaries were always employed and Justinian built a series of castles to hold his eastern frontier. From the seventh century the empire was put increasingly on a military footing, but it was not until the twelfth century that Western tactics (based on the heavy war-horse) were adopted in fighting.

Left and below: mounted warriors attack strongholds. Byzantine manuscripts. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)



The achievement of Heraclius

The cost of Justinian's reconquest of the west was borne by his successors. Justin II (565–578), overwhelmed by his own bureaucracy and harassed by religious dissent, lost Dara, the massive fortress city which held the Persian front, in 573. In turn his successor Tiberius II (578–582) lost Sirmium, the key to the Danube frontier, and Avars and Slavs poured into the Balkans. Maurice (582–602) was given a respite in the east by a pro-Byzantine usurper to the Persian throne, and was able to repair the breach in the Balkan frontier. However, here his army revolted, and, in the old Roman style, elected as emperor an illiterate officer called Phocas.

No Byzantine chronicler has a good word for Phocas. During his aimless rule (602–10) the Persians penetrated as far as Chalcedon, which faces Constantinople across the water.

In 610 Heraclius, a brilliant veteran general in North Africa, was persuaded to rid the empire of Phocas. His fleet sailed to Constantinople under the protection of an icon of the Mother of God, which it was claimed, 'had not been made by human hands.'

When Heraclius came to the throne the Balkans and most of Justinian's western conquests were passing swiftly into barbarian hands. However, his reign marks the beginning of Byzantium's imperial centuries—the central and most confident stage of the empire as an eastern power.

Heraclius was faced by simultaneous attacks on Constantinople by Avars from the north and Persians from the east. Damascus fell in 614, Jerusalem soon after and the True Cross, the most potent relic in Christendom, was carried away to Persian Ctesiphon. For a moment Heraclius considered transferring his capital from Constantinople to Carthage in North Africa. However, his restless and inventive genius initiated an even more remarkable and daring solution. He bought off the Avars, risked Slav attacks on the capital, and headed east to the source of the trouble, covering his troop movements with a powerful navy.

First he attempted to satisfy his own Eastern non-Greek subjects by devising a compromise formula of faith which bridged the gap between official Orthodoxy and their own beliefs. Then he took his eastern armies from Chalcedon to Ctesiphon—1,000 miles of conquest in six breathless years (622–28)—driving the Persians back from the Byzantine capital to their own and crushing their empire for good at Nineveh. The True Cross was brought to the Hagia Sophia amid scenes of high ceremony and great rejoicing. Heraclius' triumph was the last of the ancient world, the conclusion of the age-long rivalry between Rome and Persia.

External threats

Rome was already slipping away from the Byzantine world and the barbarian kingdoms of the west were beginning to stir into life. No future Byzantine emperor considered removing his capital to the west—or was able to do so. Instead Heraclius' successors concentrated upon putting the Byzantine provinces on a war footing.

From the end of the seventh century until the tenth century the Balkans were more or less lost to the empire—overrun by Slav settlers who were among the ancestors of the modern peoples of Yugoslavia and Greece. The Byzantines first tried evangelising the Slavs in the ninth century, but gave them a Church which was instead to become a symbol of their national consciousness. They were then forced to subdue the Slavs in a war which did not end until 1018, leav-



ing the empire exhausted and ready for revenge. In the east Heraclius' triumphs were even more short-lived. By 642, when he died, all the non-Greek provinces had fallen (often willingly) to a new and totally unpredictable enemy: the Arabs.

Heraclius left Byzantium an unmistakably eastern power. His successors led the empire into its great struggle with Islam, and with it Byzantine entered the Middle Ages.

Byzantium and Islam—the long rivalry

Nicolas Mysticus, patriarch of Constantinople (901–925) wrote:



'Two sovereignties—the Muslim and the Byzantine—surpass all sovereignty on earth, like two great lights in the firmament. For this one reason, if for no other, they ought to be partners and brethren. We ought not, because we are separated in our ways of life, our customs and worship, be altogether divided.'

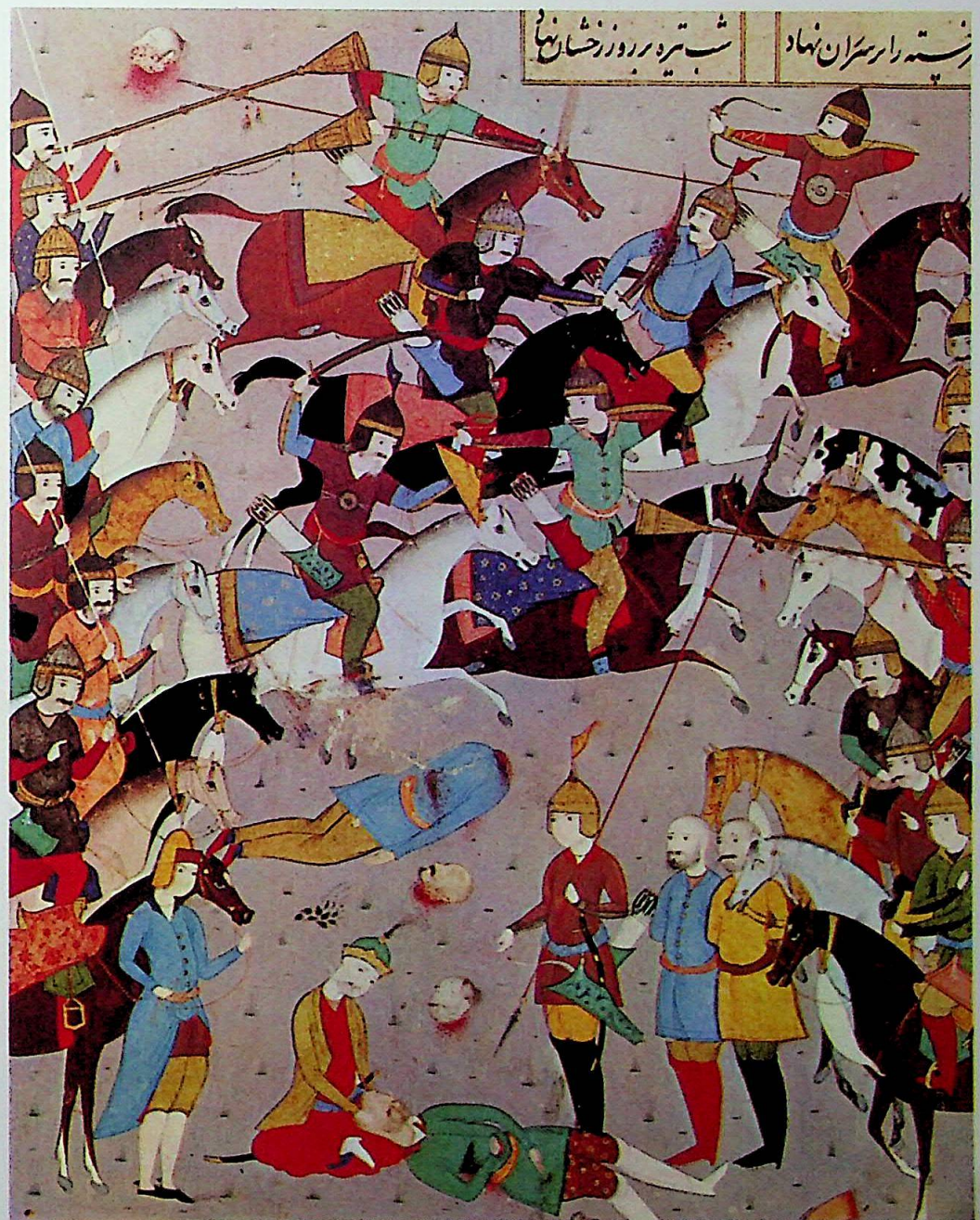
Mysticus was the pupil of Photius who, as patriarch, had revealed that there were very considerable differences of outlook between the Eastern and Western Christians. By contrast the Byzantine Empire and Abbasid caliphate had a healthy mutual respect.

When Constantinople repulsed the great Arab attack of 717–18, the Byzantine and Muslim Empires entered a centuries-long rivalry which can be paralleled with that between Rome and Persia. Once again eastern Asia Minor was the major scene of conflict. For two centuries the struggle

Far left: the earliest 'monasteries' consisted of a hermit and his disciples, who lived in caves around him. Here a prospective novice approaches the hermit.

Left: a Byzantine doctor prepares a prescription. Byzantine medical handbooks were still being used in the University of Paris in the eighteenth century, but added little to classical medicine. Byzantine manuscripts. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)

Below: in 591 the Byzantine emperor Maurice helped restore the Sassanid ruler Khosrow II, who is shown here fighting with the rebel, Bahram Chubina. Persian manuscript. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)



which was waged there turned a land of market towns into a desolate area of military garrisons.

Digenis, the hero of the Byzantine epic of the period, was part Saracen and part Byzantine. He belonged to a class of border barons who were matched on the Muslim side by Ghazis, wielders of the scimitar of Islam. The Ghazis were the advance guard of the emirates which grew up round the periphery of the caliphate. They lived in the same sort of religio-military communalism as did the Templars and Hospitallers of the crusaders.

Yet men like the legendary Digenis and Muslim border emirs, such as Saif al Dawlap of Aleppo, had a certain mutual respect. They understood each other better than they did their nominal and distant rulers in Constantinople and Baghdad. This border chivalry came to an end when Byzantium conquered eastern Anatolia (and even parts of Syria) outright and then the Seljuk Turks, who lay on the fringes of the Muslim world, arrived on the new Byzantine borders in the eleventh century.

Byzantium won its long struggle with the caliphate in the late tenth and early eleventh centuries. Its elaborate defence system ran from castle to castle—from Erzurum to Edessa and Melitene. Victory was achieved by the ruthless Basil II at the expense of the people who lived between the caliphate and the empire—the Armenians.

The Armenians were mountain people, giving generals and even dynasties to the Byzantines, but jealous of their distinctive Church and aristocratic, clan-based society. Their feudal chieftains resented the Byzantine bureaucrats. As part of his disastrous expansionist policy Basil II annexed the Armenian kingdoms, turning useful buffer states into restless vassals. For the Armenians Byzantium simply meant hectoring bishops and over-efficient tax-collectors. They complained that Constantinople sent eunuchs to protect them and that, like cowardly shepherds, the Byzantines abandoned their Armenian flocks when the wolf came.



Right: the Sassanian Bahram V sits on a bed of justice while a rebellious noble is executed. Rebellions by the nobility were a feature of Persian history, and few rulers were free of them. Fifteenth-century Persian manuscript. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)

Opposite: this carved gem depicts the great Persian victory over the Romans in A.D. 260 when Shapur captured the emperor Valerian. He grasps the Roman with his right hand, not troubling to unsheath his own sword. Sassanian cameo. Fourth century. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)

جمع کردار حلاق اسب
زند بردار کرد و پاک نزد
تا چو در سار



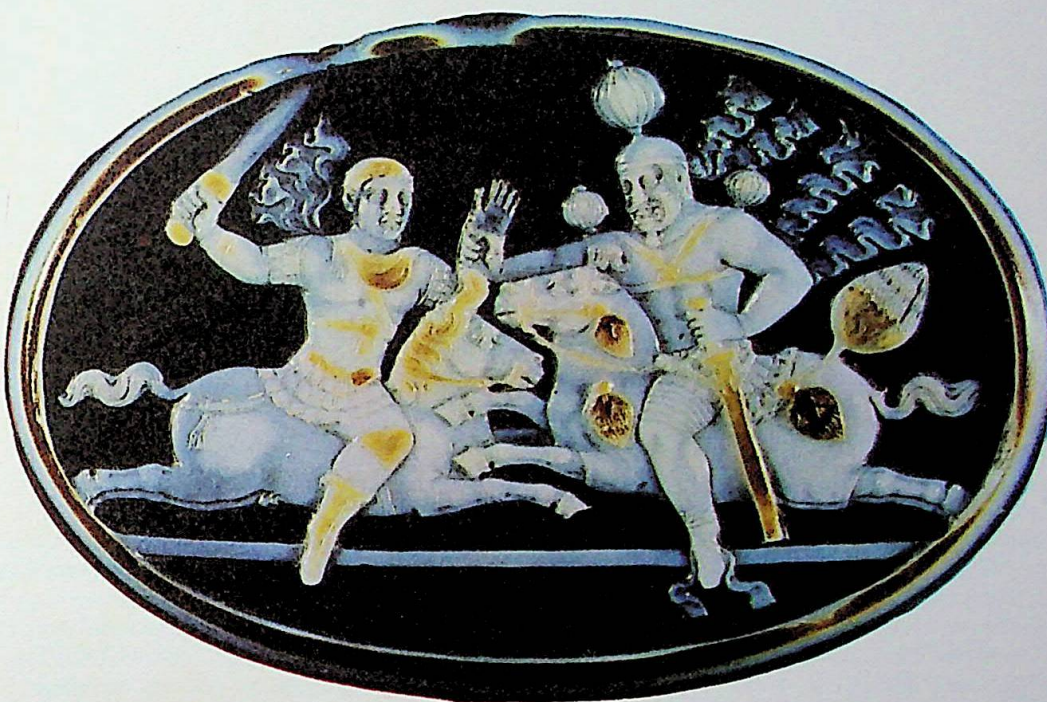
The Seljuks

The 'wolf' was a chieftain of one of the Turkic peoples who had passed through Abbasid hands, the Seljuk Alp Arslan. Within fifty years of the establishment of Basil II's Armenian frontier, the eastern defence system and the whole of central and eastern Anatolia, fell quite casually into Seljuk hands. At Manzikert in 1071 Alp Arslan captured the Byzantine emperor. By 1081 the Seljuks were in sight of Constantinople. The disaster was bad enough, but hardly surprising, for the Armenians had the Byzantine mercenaries slipped prudently away from the imperial army at Manzikert. The Seljuks were in no position to deal with determined resistance. Byzantium lay on the edge of their world. Only Byzantium was to blame when they made it instead their centre.

When the dust of conquest settled in 1081, it revealed a boundary between the Greek coastlands of Asia Minor and the central

different peoples and faiths all calling themselves 'Roman', but what amounted to a national state on the new western medieval model. At the same time Byzantium was losing just those characteristics which marked it out from other European Christian states. Byzantium became, slowly and haphazardly, feudalised, thus abandoning its ancient heritage as the successor to the tradition of the unitary and centralised state of Rome.

Byzantine contemporaries hardly mention the disaster at Manzikert, which modern historians regard as one of the decisive battles in world history. In this the Byzantines were in some ways right, for they lost only a barren land of discontented subjects. Less than two centuries after Manzikert the Seljuk state of Rum in Asia Minor was crushed in the same Mongol onslaught from the east which extinguished the last trembling Abbasid caliph at Baghdad in 1258. Byzantium, as always, survived.



plateau which had been disguised for centuries by the common rule of the Roman and Byzantine Empires.

Nothing could alter that boundary for over a century, for it was the natural distinction between those who were Greek, and prepared to fight for Byzantium, and those who were not Greek and wished to escape the burden of an increasingly alien empire. Orthodoxy, symbol of the imperial oppressors, perished without a struggle in central Asia Minor and through no Muslim persecution. Here the inhabitants became ancestors of the modern Turks.

In these years Byzantium found its true identity. It was not a universal empire of

Decadence and renaissance

It is often assumed that a decline must precede a fall. The long-awaited fall of Constantinople in 1453 was preceded, for almost three centuries by the steady contraction of the Byzantine Empire until it comprised little more than the city itself. During this period Byzantium experienced one financial crisis after another and its commerce was almost entirely lost to Venice and Genoa. In addition, its emperors were increasingly forced to tour western courts to beg for help against the infidel—even, on two occasions (Lyons in 1274 and Florence in 1439) signing Acts of Reunion with the



In the century after Mohammed's death (A.D. 632) the armies of the new faith conquered from the Atlantic to the Indus. Abu Bakr, the first caliph, left Mecca and Medina to conquer all Arabia. By the time of the accession of the first Umayyad caliph in 661 the Arabs had moved on to take Khorasan, Persia, Mesopotamia, Syria, Egypt and part of the North African coast. On the centenary of the Prophet's death in 732 they had penetrated as far as Poitiers in France, and Spain lay within their grasp. Before the fall of the Umayyads in 750 the Islamic Empire had extended east as far as Samarkand. But in the west the Christian kingdoms of Spain were beginning their slow reconquest of the peninsula, and in the east Byzantium stood firm.

Roman Church in the hope of western support which rarely materialised. The meaning only too clear: 'The future can only be worse,' observed Pachymeres, 'In autumn there are no flowers; it is the season for dying.'

The autumn of the Byzantine Empire may have been a period of material decline, but it was hardly one of cultural decadence. These last centuries saw one of the most vigorous and impressive of all revivals of Byzantine civilisation. For the last time the age-old empire triumphantly demonstrated that it had something to offer the contemporary world.

Outwardly Byzantium now looked very much like other western states. Great feudal lords controlled the surviving provinces of Thrace and the Morea, the old bureaucracy was less pervasive and the Church was politically prominent. The empire had narrowed to its cultural boundaries and now a few literary Byzantines began calling themselves 'Hellenes' (formerly a pejorative word indicating pagans), rather than 'Romans'.

In the Renaissance of contemporary Italy there was a revival of humanism and the values of classical antiquity but it could only

be a self-conscious, even dilettante, movement compared with the Byzantine revival. Italians, such as Pius II or Pico della Mirandola, had to learn their Greek. Byzantine scholars had been brought up with the language of the ancients. For them the relevance of classical teaching to everyday life had always been evident.

Fourteenth-century Byzantine civil servants, like Metochites or Choumnos, theologians like Gregory Palamas, scholars like Gregoras, and artists like Theophanes the Greek, all show a lively and individual approach to reinterpreting classical and Christian teaching and traditions.

The Greeks were able to look beyond their empire. The Cydones brothers translated St Thomas Aquinas, the Emperor Manuel II Palaeologos published his debates with a Muslim theologian. At the same time Byzantium endowed with its own particular quality the culture of two of its most brilliant offshoots: fourteenth-century Serbia and fifteenth-century Russia. Byzantine scholars, like Chrysoloras, taught in Italian universities.

In its last days Byzantium could still produce the wayward geniuses of Gemistos

Plethon and Michael Trivolis. Plethon dreamed of setting up a neo-Platonic utopia in the Morea (a dream only, for he was a substantial feudal landowner there). In the late fifteenth century Trivolis was in turn, classical scholar in Venice and Florence, disciple of Savonarola, a monk on Athos and religious polemicist in Moscow (where he was the first to inform the Russians of the discovery of Cuba). He was finally canonised by the Old Believers as St Maximos the Greek.

The crusaders capture Constantinople

The fall of Constantinople to the crusaders in 1204 was simply the culmination of an internal process of disintegration, social, economic and political. The shock of the loss of their capital brought Byzantines to their senses. Though Pope Innocent III never won his Universal Church, the short-lived Latin Empire was precarious from the start, and the crusading ideal was debased for ever.

Byzantium had, nonetheless, much to its credit. New life and a new confidence came to the surviving Greek provinces in Greece, western Anatolia and in the pocket empire of Trebizond, which bore notable fruit when Constantinople was restored to them in 1261. The Palaeologi, who ruled from then until 1453, were distinguished emperors, but they and their poverty were too well known in Europe and among the Turks. The empire had lost its mystery.

The Byzantines never really came to terms with the loss of their imperial role. In the last years of the fourteenth century a patriarch could still berate a grand prince of Moscow with the assertion that the emperor

'is not as other rulers are . . . Yea, even if the Turks now encircle the government and residence of the emperor, he has still to this day the same appointment . . . as Emperor and Autocrat of the Romans—to wit of all Christians'.

At the same time Byzantines sought comfort once more in their still accumulating traditions of Hellenism and Orthodoxy. Both formal reunions of the Eastern and Western Churches were firmly rejected by the majority of the Orthodox, regardless of political consequences. In the troubled years of the fourteenth century the monasteries on Athos and in Thessaly flourished and a new spiritual discipline, a form of quietism, was evolved.

Social conflict

Byzantium shared the social problems of most western countries, aggravated by the Black Death of 1347. The Zealots, who created a commune in Salonika in 1342–50, in defiance of the great feudal lords and



financiers, led the only 'Peasants' Revolt' in fourteenth-century Europe to achieve any measure of success. The Zealots were also concerned with the threat posed by the Balkan hegemony of Tsar Stephen Dushan of Serbia (1331–55). The empire was weakened by civil wars which broke out in 1341, 1354 and 1376, in which the feudal lords and the Church were unwilling or unable to defend their lands and the state could no longer hire adequate mercenaries.

In 1354 John VI Cantacuzene invited the Ottomans over the Gallipoli straits into Europe to fight Byzantium's war with Serbia. The expedient worked too well, for it gave birth to the Ottoman Empire as a European power and ensured that it would be the Turks, not the Serbs, who eventually took Constantinople.

The Ottoman threat

After the Seljuks had been crushed by the Mongols at Köse Dagh in 1243, Asia Minor disintegrated into a number of emirates. In the late thirteenth century Othman (Osman),

Above: Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic year, during which the faithful fast between dawn and sunset. The caliph's trumpeters are shown here sounding the end of Ramadan. Thirteenth-century Arab manuscript. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)



Above: Christ crowns the Byzantine emperor Nicephorus III Botaniates (1078–81) and his wife Maria. They wear traditional Byzantine imperial robes. During Nicephorus' reign the Seljuk Turks conquered Asia Minor. Nicephorus was succeeded by Alexius I Comnenus (1081–1118) who managed to contain the invaders. Byzantine manuscript. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)

the founder of the Ottoman (Osmanli) dynasty, created a border state in north-western Anatolia.

Because his was the only emirate in the front line against the Byzantine infidel, it attracted many Ghazi warriors. Ghazi emirates could thrive only on conquest and the Ottoman was the only one which could expand. The Ottomans were also willing to learn from the Byzantines and Italians, and Sultan Orkhan (1324–59) expanded his state not in Anatolia but in the Balkans. John V Palaeologos became the effective vassal of Sultan Murad I in 1373. Sultan Murad met his death on the field of Kossovo, where he destroyed the Serbian Empire in 1389.

Sultan Bayezid I (1389–1402), called 'The Thunderbolt', continued the Balkan conquests. He took the Bulgarian capital in 1393 and routed a western crusade at Nicopolis in 1396. He then turned to take control of the Anatolian emirates. However, he had not reckoned with Timur who, in 1402, defeated the Ottoman army at Ankara and captured Bayezid himself.

Byzantium was given its final respite. Timur restored all the old Anatolian emirates. The Ottomans retained little save their European conquests. Already they had

been forced to employ Serbs and Bulgarians to run their state. The levy of Christian children into the administrative and military corps (especially as janissaries or elite soldiers) ensured regular transfusions of enthusiastic Muslim converts into the Ottoman system. Already the Ottomans had inherited the Serbian and Bulgarian ambition of making Constantinople the capital of a Balkan Empire. It was the Byzantines in 1354 and the Mongols in 1402 who created out of an Anatolian emirate a new European power, the Ottoman Empire.

The last Mongol upheaval

In the fourteenth century the provinces of Genghis Khan's Mongol Empire went their own ways. The ilkhate of Persia broke up in 1337 into four petty kingdoms, with the Turkmans of the White and Black Sheep tribes in the ascendancy. In Russia the Khan of the Golden Horde suffered his first great defeat at Kulikovo on the Don river in 1380. Dmitri Donskoi, grand prince of Moscow, was now supreme.

The Mongol Empire united once more before it destroyed itself. Timur (the name means 'iron') or Tamerlane, who was born



in Transoxiana in 1336, was not a second Genghis. He was a Muslim and regarded his conquests as something of a holy war to remind other Muslims (such as the Ottomans) of their duties to Islam. Nonetheless, there are similarities in the careers of Genghis and Timur: the slow building up of the support of nomad peoples from small beginnings, the vast and speedy conquests and the same exalted concept of empire. Timur was a more reckless and ruthless destroyer than Genghis, but he was not an uncouth nomad. Under him was evolved the magnificent architecture and delicate decoration of the great mosques and mausoleums of Samarkand, which survive today.

Timur's earliest conquests, from his base beyond the Oxus river, were to the east in Kwarazmia and Moghulistan. He never reached China, but suspended tribute to the nominal great khan and demanded his submission instead. In 1381-4 Timur campaigned in Khorosan, Sistan and Mazandaran. In 1386-8 he overran Azerbaijan, Georgia and Persia, and in 1391-2 he tested the strength of Tokhtamish, the last great Khan of the Golden Horde in Russia.

During 1392-6 he embarked on a campaign in the west and finally defeated

Tokhtamish. Later, in 1398-9, he entered India, took Delhi and penetrated south. He launched in 1400 his final seven-year campaign in the west, starting from the Karabagh. The Anatolian emirates which Bayezid had been subduing were conquered in turn, and reinstated by Timur in the years 1400-1. In 1402 he seized Bayezid and wrecked his army (which included German gunners, one of whom survived to tell the tale). Then he retired east again.

Timur's restless conquests, from Smyrna to Karakorum, from the Volga to the Ganges, make Alexander the Great's expedition in the same area look small. However, in this final fling, the Mongol Empire burnt itself out. Timur first recreated and then destroyed it as thoroughly as he had razed the cities he captured. When he died in 1405 the huge state collapsed. In Persia the Timurids held out until 1502. In India his descendants ruled as great moguls from 1526 until 1857.

A Spaniard at Timur's court

Ruy Gonzales Clavijo, a level-headed Spanish ambassador, reached Timur's court at Samarkand in September 1403. His

Justinian's reconquest of the West restored Italy and much of the coastlands of the Mediterranean to the empire, but it was already clear that the real strength of Byzantium lay in the East. From the seventh century the Arabs overran Syria, Egypt, North Africa and Spain, while the Slavs entered the Balkans. Syria was briefly recaptured in the tenth century and by 1025 Basil II had incorporated Armenia and completed the long process of restoring the Balkans to imperial rule. The empire still retained footholds in southern Italy and the Crimea, but its heart lay in Thrace and western Asia Minor.



Above: stonework on the Church of the Holy Cross on Aghthamar Island, Lake Van. Built by King Gagik of Vasparkan in 915, it is a good example of Armenian art.

description of the aged and lame (some say also albino) conqueror, and of the palaces and gardens of the capital, is one of the best. Clavijo was escorted to Timur who was

Such was the most powerful of all medieval emperors at the zenith of his rule.

Clavijo was feasted in many palaces. He noted all the old Mongol traits:

'seated under a portal which was before the entrance of the most beautiful palace. He was sitting on a raised dais before which there was a fountain that threw up a column of water in the air backwards, and in the basin of the fountain there were floating red apples. His Highness was dressed in a cloak of plain silk without any embroidery, and he wore on his head a tall white hat on the crown of which was displayed a balas ruby, the same being ornamented with pearls and precious stones'.

'It is the custom' of the Tartars to drink their wine before eating. No feast we were told is considered a real festival until the guests have drunk themselves sot. The attendants who serve them with drink kneel before the guests, and as soon as one cup of wine has been emptied another is presented.'

Clavijo suffered diplomatic agonies for he did not like wine and always refused it.

The Spanish ambassador witnessed one of the last gatherings of the Mongol clans on the plain of Kanigil. The whole Horde gathered for a month's debate and festivities.

Clavijo and his companions prostrated three times. Timur beckoned them to come closer, and the chamberlains who had been escorting them stood back.

'As soon as Timur's camp had been pitched all these folk of the Horde exactly knew where each clan had its place. From the greatest to the humblest each man knew his allotted position, and took it up. Thus in the course of the next three or four days we saw near 20,000 tents pitched in regular streets to encircle the royal camp, and daily more clans came in from outlying districts.'

'for they dared not advance any nearer. His Highness commanded us to stand close to him so that he might the better see us, for his sight was no longer good. Indeed he was so infirm and old that his eyelids were falling over his eyes and he could barely raise them to see.'

Mongol tribal cohesion had survived



almost intact two centuries after Genghis Khan first led his Horde out of the High Altai. To the artisans and merchants of Samarkand the great tented encampment of the nomads who ruled them must have been as strange a sight as it was to the Spaniard Clavijo.

The days of the Horde were numbered. Soon they were to retreat back to the mountain pastures whence first they came. Timur's disapproving Arab chronicler saw the conqueror of the world throw himself wholeheartedly into the festivities for the last time at this particular gathering.

'Everything succeeded according to desire and his wishes were satisfied until pleasure and bounding joy made him light and agile, and he linked his arm with another's and stretched out his hand to one who rose before him and they helped each other with arms joined. And when he was in the midst of dancing, he tottered amongst them because of his age and lameness.'

The Balkans, Russia and the West

Byzantium's offspring and successor states rivalled those of the empire itself. The

revived Bulgarian Empire of the Asen family (1187-1393) which nearly destroyed the Latin Empire of Constantinople (1204-61), was itself a confederation and culturally backward. Like Serbia, it shared with Constantinople the same Orthodox faith, most of the same legal and theological handbooks and some of the same classical textbooks.

Serbia was the most brilliant, faithful and dangerous of Byzantium's Balkan heirs. Milutin (Urosh II, 1282-1321) and Stephen Dushan (Urosh IV, 1331-55) tried to outdo the Byzantines in governmental forms and imperial splendour. The architecture of the great monasteries they founded (such as Gracanitsa and Studenitsa) may be described as Byzantine baroque. Yet their paintings have the same faithfulness to the Hellenistic forms which were being revived once more in Constantinople.

After its defeat at Kossovo in 1389, the Serbian Empire contracted to a minor despotate centred on the fortress of Smederevo (Semendria) on the Danube near Belgrade.

In the late fourteenth century, Russia, whose centres of power moved during the Mongol hegemony from Kiev to Novgorod and Moscow in the north, resumed its contacts with Constantinople. These were



Above left: civil wars resulted from the conflict between John VI Cantacuzene (1347-54), representative of the great landowners, and his son-in-law, John V Palaeologus (1341-91), the legitimate emperor. Cantacuzene is shown presiding over a council and as a monk on Athos (above), where he retired to write his lengthy memoirs. Byzantine miniatures. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)



Above: the church of the Hagia Sophia seen here surrounded by Turkish minarets. Built by the emperor Justinian, it fell with the rest of Constantinople in 1453 to the Turkish army led by Mehmet II. Since that time it has remained a Muslim mosque. Engraving.

Opposite: the emperor Nicephorus III Botaniates standing between St John and the archangel Michael. Miniature from The Homilies of St John Chrysostom. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)

largely ecclesiastical and cultural. The names of Russian tourists of this period have been found scratched on the walls of the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople. Patriarchs looked to Moscow for alms.

Later some Russians claimed Moscow as the 'Third Rome', legitimate heir to the Empire of Constantinople, the Second Rome, and a defender of Orthodoxy unsullied by the betrayal of the Byzantine bishops who had signed the Act of Reunion with the Roman Church at Florence in 1439. It was, however, never more than a monkish idea and the importance of Byzantine features in the later Russian state have been much exaggerated.

Besides the tumbledown city of Constantinople, now just seven villages within the encircling walls, only the Morea (the Peloponnese) remained to the Byzantine Empire. The Morea was a semi-independent

despotate and inspired Greek hopes for the future. Even here, according to a contemporary inscription, the nobility 'breathed jealousy, deceit, strife and murder'. The despotate's little capital at Mistra, near Sparta, fell four years after Constantinople itself.

The Fourth Crusade of 1204 had brought Italian rulers to the Byzantine world. The Genoese ran the Black Sea trade from their outposts at Caffa, Trebizond, Moncastro (Akkerman) and Pera. They also controlled a few Aegean islands and the alum mines at Phocaea, near Smyrna. The Venetians ran the eastern Mediterranean trade with Beirut, Alexandria and the southern Aegean. Here they held Euboea (Negroponte), some other Aegean islands and the 'Great Island' of Crete. Candia, the Cretan capital, fell to the Ottomans only in 1669.

Before then numbers of Greek scholars,

ΕΓΩ ΜΕΝ ΕΙΜΙ ΟΣ ΦΥΛΑΞΕΙΣ ΤΗ ΦΥΛΗ
 Ο ΔΑΥΙΔ ΕΙΣ ΤΗ ΚΑΤΑΧΡΕΣΤΗΝ ΦΕΛΩΝ ΤΟ ΜΑ
 ΑΙ ΤΩΝ ΣΥΝΗΜΙΝ ΤΕ ΦΕΟΣ ΤΥΣ ΧΑΡ

ΩΣ ΕΙΝΑΥ Τ ΠΡΑΜΑΤΩΝ ΤΑ ΕΚΒΑΣΕΙΣ
 ΟΣΥ ΠΡΑΦΕΥΣ ΤΗΝ ΠΕΙΣ ΔΥΣΩ ΠΙΑΝ
 ΟΝ ΕΥ ΜΕΝΩΣ ΓΡΑΠΟΙΣ ΤΕ ΚΙ ΤΕ ΡΟΣ ΑΝΑ

ΘΑ ΙΩ Ο Ζ

ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣΑΥ ΤΗ ΡΑ ΤΩ

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merchants and painters, including El Greco, had made their way to Venice and the University of Padua. Venice retained the Ionian islands, including Corfu, until Napoleon's day. Perhaps the most unexpected of western conquests in the Byzantine world was the Catalan occupation of Athens for most of the fourteenth century. The Catalan company, one of a number of European contingents in the Byzantine service, had, as was usual, run amok when they were not paid. These Spaniards simply took over the ruined city of Athens.

Mehmet II

The Ottoman Empire took two decades to recover from its defeat at Ankara. The civil war between Musa and Mehmet, the sons of

Bayezid, resembled that between John V Palaeologos and John VI Cantacuzene in Byzantium half a century before. The lower classes, both Christian and Muslim supported Musa who was finally defeated by Mehmet I, the representative of the aristocratic party, in 1413.

Murad II (1421–51) resumed the work of conquest which Timur had interrupted. His son Mehmet II finally succeeded him in 1451, at the age of nineteen. Through his ancestry the new sultan was connected with the ruling families of Byzantium, Serbia, and Trebizond and also with the ruling dynasties of Mongol and Turkman Persia.

Anatolia had been settled by groups of Turkic peoples claiming common ancestors. The early histories of their clans are celebrated in heroic poetry and epic which has



Below: Sultan Murad I conquered much of the southern Balkans. He was killed at the battle of Kossovo, and his son Bayezid I (centre), succeeded him. Bayezid went on to conquer Bulgaria but was captured by Timur at Ankara in 1402. Far left: Turks in battle. Miniatures. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)



strong genealogical interest, such as the ballads of Dede Korkut or the deeds of Melik Danishmend. The most famous of these groups claimed descent from Othman.

The Greeks entered the new system of government even before they were conquered, from the day when Michael VIII Palaeologos married his illegitimate daughter to the ilkhān of Persia. The Greek Cantacuzene family was one of the groups which held together the Ottoman and Byzantine worlds, providing a coherence behind the political boundaries which were so complex at this time. George Amiroutzes, for example, Greek delegate at the Council of Florence, was related to the Trapezuntine and Serbian royal families as well as to Mehmet II's Begler Bey of the West, to whom he surrendered Trebizond in 1461.

This sort of relationship was one of many which softened the blow of Ottoman conquest, for Amiroutzes' son went on to become Ottoman minister of finance.

Conquest often did not affect the position of the old ruling families. Where once they had held land in return for military obligations, now they became lords of hereditary military fiefs. For instance, Evrenos, last Byzantine governor of Broussa (Bursa) took office among his conquerors. His grandson conquered the Morea for the Ottomans and the family held the fief of Yenidje Vardar until the nineteenth century.

The capture of Constantinople

Constantinople finally fell to the young Mehmet II, henceforth called 'the Conqueror', on Tuesday, 29 May 1453, after a siege which, through the desperation of its inhabitants, had lasted several weeks. The event caused no great stir in the West and was in fact of importance only to the two peoples chiefly involved—the Greeks and the Turks.

For the Turks it was the final stage in the creation of a European empire out of an Anatolian border emirate. Mehmet II, with his largely Balkan armies, went on to conquer most of the Anatolian emirates and the great Uzun Hasan of the White Sheep, as well as the Crimea, before he died in 1481. This was an essentially European conquest in Asia. The sultan with his wide-ranging intellectual interests in philosophy, theology, natural sciences and even art, was something of an Ottoman counterpart of the Renaissance princes of Italy.

The transference of the Ottoman capital to Constantinople, and the repopulation of the city (largely by Greeks) was, for the Ottomans, the symbolic claim to the old universal empire, Mehmet II became the padishah or emperor.

It is only partly true to say that the Ottoman Empire was heir to the Byzantine. Although in administrative and social detail there are no real parallels, the Ottoman and Byzantine Empires did rule the same peoples in the same areas from the same capital. From the subject peoples the Ottoman Empire largely drew its military and administrative institution, a non-hereditary ruling class, devoted to the sultan. He gave the state an impetus which slowed down only towards the end of the sixteenth century.

The Ottoman Empire was one of the most successful multi-national states which the world has ever seen. Its success was achieved only at the expense of the Turks, its dominant people. The Turks, and especially the Anatolian peasantry, became increasingly self-effacing and were the last of the component peoples of the empire to gain their own independence from it.

For the Greeks, the conquest was equally important, though only a fraction of them had lived in the Byzantine Empire for a



century. When he appointed Gennadius II as patriarch, Mehmed gave his office greater spiritual powers than it had known for centuries, and more extensive political authority than it had ever enjoyed. Spiritually the ecumenical patriarch ruled over almost all Greeks within the empire, and to these were even added the errant Serbs and Bulgars. The control of the Orthodox Church of Constantinople, hitherto largely confined to the shrinking boundaries of the Byzantine Empire, stretched once more from the Adriatic to the Caucasus. Greeks now looked to the patriarch, answerable only to the sublime porte, as their 'ethnarch' or national leader. The patriarchate assumed many of the functions and ceremony of the Byzantine emperors and its symbol was the double-headed eagle of the departed Palaeologus family.



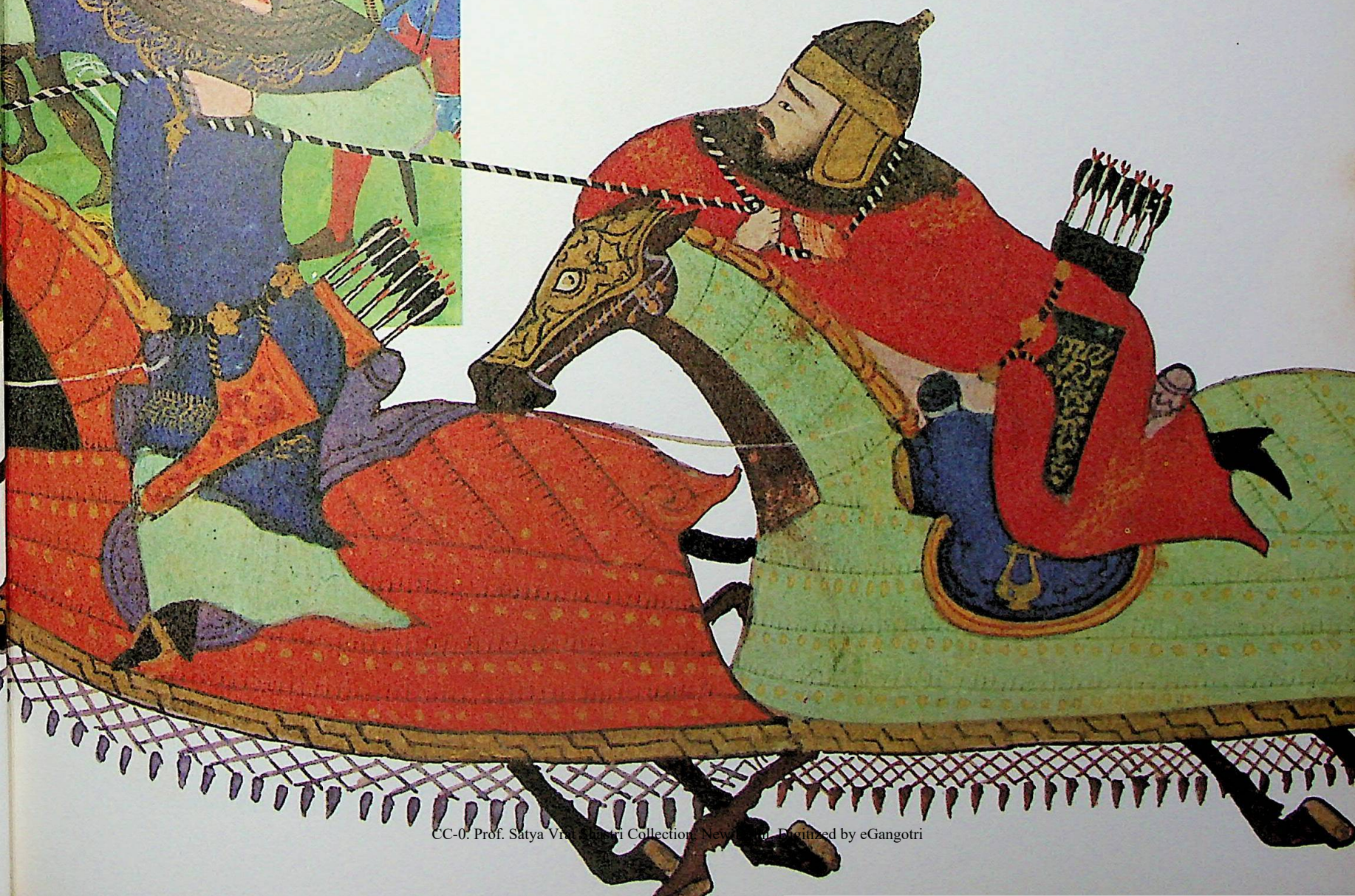
The system which provided for semi-autonomous government within the empire, was shared by a number of other Christian peoples. However, the Greeks had peculiar advantages over their fellow subjects, since they were fitted to carry out tasks that the Turks themselves could not, or would not, perform. As Christians, as scholars, as official Ottoman diplomats, and as merchants they never lost touch with the western world, particularly Italy.

'The Great Idea'

When Constantinople fell, Greeks began to think of 'The Great Idea', the dream of recapturing the City and restoring its Empire. A contemporary ballad describes how the fateful news was received in Trebizond:

'A bird, a beautiful bird, flew out from the City:
It shook one wing, and it was covered with blood;
It shook the other wing, and there was paper with writing beneath:
"Woe unto us, woe unto us: Byzantium is no more!
The ramparts are lost: the imperial Throne is destroyed!
The churches are devastated: the monasteries are wrecked!"'

While Turk and Mongol fought in Asia Minor (below), the armies of Sigismund of Hungary defended Christendom in the west against the Turks (left). Three great local leaders in the resistance against the Turks emerged in the Balkans in the fifteenth century: John Hunyadin, regent of Hungary, George Brankovich, ruler of Serbia, and George Castriota, 'Skanderbeg', the Albanian patriot. Their memory survives in the heroic poetry of Hungary, Serbia and Albania. Miniatures. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)





Above: Timur the Lame, self-proclaimed heir to Genghis Khan and last and most devastating of the Mongol conquerors. His victory over the Turks at Ankara gave Constantinople a brief respite. Miniature. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)

However, the refrain was: 'If Byzantium is lost now, she will flower once more and bear fruit.'

These words express 'The Great Idea', the dream of recapturing Constantinople and of restoring the old Empire which haunted the Greek mind until this century. What the Greeks did not realise until it was too late was that they had in fact achieved 'The Great Idea' under the Ottomans. The organisation of this almost uniquely successful multi-racial state was peculiarly favourable to Greek ambitions. It was ruled only through the curious self-effacement of its nominally dominant people, the Turks. Like the

Greeks who were, after 1261, the last of the peoples of the old Byzantine Empire to gain their independence within it—simply because all their subject peoples had broken away—so it was the Turks who were the last of all the peoples of the Ottoman Empire to achieve national independence in 1922.

The Ottomans

The Ottoman Empire was ruled not only through its provincial governors and native feudatories (*Dere beys*), but also vertically through the religious leaders, established in Constantinople, of the various peoples

(*millets*) of which it was composed. Of these peoples only the hapless Turks did not enjoy the status and privileges of a *millet*. They bore the appalling human cost of military expansion in the fifteenth and sixteenth, and contraction in the nineteenth, centuries. The Ottomans themselves were not so much Turks as a great ruling extended family, wielders of the holy scimitar of Islam and as much the oppressors of the Muslim peasants of Anatolia as the Byzantine autocrats had been of their Christian ancestors.



The Ottoman civil and military systems were, like those of the Byzantines, very closely connected. The provinces and their armies were under the command of 'Beys of beys' of the East (Asia) and the West (Europe).

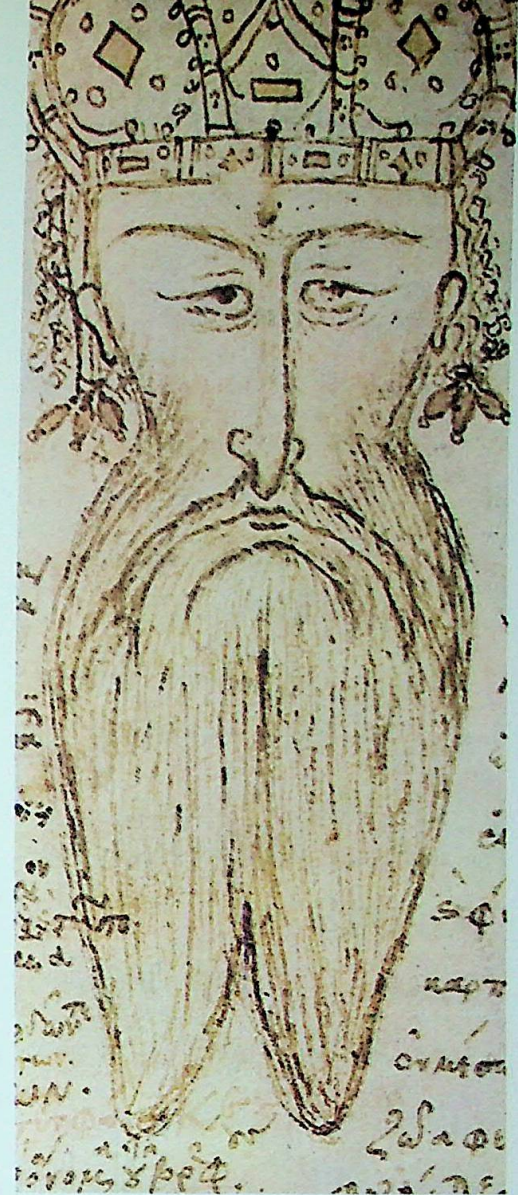
Left: Turkish beys confer in a pavilion. Above: an enemy is lassoed from an elephant. Miniatures. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)



Above: the emperor Manuel II Palaeologus toured the courts of Europe to seek help against the Turk. He made a great impression among the English when he spent Christmas 1400 at Eltham, outside London. But it was Timur, not the Western powers, who saved his empire from the Ottomans in 1402.

Right: the Persian game of chougan (from which polo was derived) was also popular in Byzantium. It was a fast-moving and dangerous sport, designed to show aristocratic expertise on horseback. Miniatures. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)





Above: the emperor John VIII Palaeologus also sought help from the West. He encouraged the reunion of the Orthodox and Catholic Churches at the Council of Florence in 1439, but his Byzantine subjects regarded him as a heretic thereafter. Miniature. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)

The Ethnarch

For the Greeks the old Emperor had gone, but the Patriarch, now called *Ethnarch* or 'national leader', stepped quite literally into his imperial buskins of purple and assumed his symbol of the double-headed eagle. Thus it was that a Sassanian silk design, adopted by the Seljuks in the twelfth century, became the imperial device of Russia and Germany and the symbol of the modern Greek Orthodox Church. The Patriarch's spiritual boundaries now extended from the Caucasus to the Adriatic—the Ottomans even restored the errant Churches of Bulgaria and Serbia to the Greeks—while his political powers in Constantinople were greater than they had ever been under the departed Emperors. The history of the Great Church of Constantinople under the Ottomans is not particularly edifying (between 1453 and 1842 ninety-three Patriarchs enjoyed 140 reigns, usually buying their position from the Sultan at enormous cost to the faithful). But the Patriarchate at least preserved almost intact into the modern world the Byzantine political concept of a world order in which the Greeks had a special mission; and its servants used the Ottoman Empire as a practical vehicle for what amounted to a re-enactment of Byzantine methods of rule in many provinces. These prosperous Greeks, merchants, ecclesiastics and politicians whom even modern Greeks hesitate to call 'collaborators', lived in splendid wooden mansions in the Phanar quarter of Constantinople, where the Patriarchate itself was moved in 1601. The Phanariots, as they were called, some claiming descent from the great families of Byzantium, were vigorously anti-Western. Just before the fall of Constantinople the Grand Duke Luke Notaras had claimed that 'it is better to see in the City the power of the Turkish turban than that of the Latin tiara.' This view, and the appalling memories of the betrayal of Byzantium and of Orthodoxy to the West in 1204 and in 1439, held good until well into the nineteenth century. It made the Phanariots the most trustworthy diplomats the Ottomans could employ—when in 1793 the Empire sent permanent *chargés-d'affaires* to the European capitals, they were almost entirely Greek.

The role of the Phanariots

The Phanariots did well out of the Ottoman Empire. Their capital, Constantinople, was repopulated with Greeks by Mehmet II and remained, until this century, the capital of the Greek world. From the seventeenth century certain high offices in the Divan and the Porte were reserved for Greeks: the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and of the Navy among them. In the eighteenth century Byzantine forms of rule were revived once more in the Rumanian provinces, which were governed for the Ottomans by Phana-



riot princes. Michael Photeinopoulos' legal code, published in Bucharest in 1795, is essentially a revival of Justinian's laws. But in their brief and turbulent reigns in Rumania the Phanariot princes had to recoup the costs of obtaining their posts and to make their fortunes for retirement; the Rumanian people were the only sufferers from the system. When, in 1821, Alexander Hysilantes crossed the Pruth to lead the Rumanians to rebellion against the Ottomans and to achieve the Phanariot 'Great Idea', his raid proved a fiasco. Instead it was the revolution in southern Greece of that year which succeeded—for a very different aim: the creation of a Greek national kingdom on nineteenth-century lines, not the restoration of a medieval Byzantine Empire.

For the rich Phanariots of Constantinople and the Anatolian Greeks who dreamt of 'The Great Idea', time stood still after 1453. The great social, economic and intellectual upheavals of the West bypassed them. The Renaissance, the Reformation, the Industrial Revolution never touched them. Towards the end of the eighteenth century some Greeks were pitchforked from the past into the heady ideals of contemporary Europe. The writings of eighteenth-century French liberals and revolutionaries were translated for (if imperfectly understood by) the merchant circles of Smyrna and the Greek *Frontisteria* of Dimitisana and Trebizond.

Their effect was devastating. Both Kolokotronis, the bandit who helped lead the Greek national revolt of 1821 (when he was not in Turkish pay) and Atatürk, the founder of the Turkish national state of 1922, confessed themselves profoundly influenced by the works of Voltaire. It was not the Greek revolt of 1821 but the eighteenth-century French revolutionary concept of nationalism which suddenly supplanted the age-old Byzantine and Ottoman idea of a God-protected universal Empire. The Phanariots and the Ottomans reacted strongly against the subversive new teaching from the heretic West. In 1798 Patriarch Anthimos of Jerusalem condemned Eugenios Voulgaris, a Greek monastic teacher who had identified himself with current French political thought, in these words: 'when the last emperors of Constantinople began to subject the Orthodox Church to papal thralldom, the particular favour of heaven raised up the Ottoman Empire to protect the Greeks against heresy, to be a barrier against the political power of the Western nations, and to be a champion of Orthodox Christianity.'

Greek nationalism

Anthimos and probably the majority of Greeks would have viewed the tiny Greek state of 1821, which was later given a German monarchy on the European model,

Right: Mehmet II, the Conqueror. This brilliant and unorthodox sultan, who is seen admiring a rose, conquered more than Constantinople. Under him the Ottoman armies established an empire from the Danube to the Euphrates. Miniature. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)

Left: a Turk cuts the throat of his enemy. Strangulation with the bowstring was reserved for more exalted foes. Miniature from the Book of Kings. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)





Murad II defeated the last Western crusade at Varna in 1444. The battle is here depicted by a French painter as if it were like Agincourt. Miniature. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)

as dangerous and absurd. The dilemma of these years lay for Greeks not in the question of rebellion against the Ottoman Empire, but in reconciling an ancient tradition and outlook with the new economic and intellectual menace from the West. For during the nineteenth century European managers began to take over and transform the hulk of the Ottoman Empire. The Greeks of

Anatolia prospered as never before, following the new railway lines across Turkey. But this re-hellenisation was directed from Athens, not Constantinople. They were taught to regard themselves as the heirs of Pericles, not Basil the Bulgarslayer. And beyond Athens lay the European West, entrancing and unlike anything the old patriarchs and padishahs had stood for. In the words of the Greek philosopher and patriot, Ion Dragoumis: 'The Greeks, before 1821, had a life with a definite purpose. They had an eastern way of life and their purpose was to free themselves from the Turks and to recapture Constantinople. After 1821 they took it upon themselves to overturn various idols... Before, everything was in order, everything was put in its place... Then suddenly in 1821 a Greek state became independent; everyone saw that things can change; they saw the Euro-

peans, they bought new clothes from Europe, new systems of government... And thus a greater revolution took place than had taken place against the sultan.'

From 1821 until 1923 'The Great Idea', the Byzantine dream, had its final and sinister lease of life—as a chauvinistic national Greek movement of irredentism directed from Athens. It was not finally exorcised until the Greco-Turkish war of 1919–23, after which the Greeks and the Turks exchanged their alien populations. For the first time in over 1700 years Constantinople ceased to be capital of a universal empire, and the Turks, like the Greeks of the Morea in 1821, strove to erect a national state on the Western model. The pretensions of Constantinople were broken at last and the ghost of Byzantium finally laid, five centuries after its last emperor had died at the Gate of St Romanos.



In the late fourteenth century the Ottomans extended their boundaries from western Asia Minor to the Balkans, moving their capital from Broussa to Hadrianople and encircling the Byzantine Empire of Constantinople. The greater part of Serbia was conquered at the battle of Kossovo (1389) and Bulgaria was overrun. Sultan Bayezid turned to incorporate the emirates of Asia Minor but met defeat at the hands of Timur's Mongols at the battle of Ankara (1402). This gave Constantinople a respite, but the Ottomans, now primarily a European power, consolidated their Balkan possessions. Sultan Mehmet II took up Bayezid's plan of conquest again, taking Constantinople (1453) and Greece (1458). By his death in 1481 he had subdued most of the emirates of Asia Minor and the boundaries of his empire resembled those of Byzantium in the early eleventh century.

Persia under the Sassanids

*Strong rulers weld together a scattered people; 'divide and rule'
—Persia encourages Christian heresies; the King of Kings
is ignominiously murdered.*

Geographical diversity and cultural unity

The internal history of Persia has been dictated by the endless desert plateau which lies at the centre of the country. Surrounding the desert, fertile valleys reach into the Zagros Mountains in the south-west, the Elburz chain which bounds the southern shores of the Caspian and, in the northeast, the first foothills of the Hindu Kush.

It is a country of fertile pockets consisting of small towns and agricultural communities dominated by great landowners, all forming a string of separate cultures. The wandering peoples of the plateau were uncontrollable and from the desert came political chaos. The surrounding mountains were no barrier to invaders and only an exceptionally determined central government could bring cohesion to the country, unite the independent townships and subdue the nomads. Above all, only an efficient administration could protect and organise the complex irrigation systems on which so much Persian agriculture (and local authority) depended. The intricately designed subterranean water-courses were abandoned and collapsed whenever the government was unable to guarantee local security.

Despite Persia's geographical diversity and the long antagonism between its nomadic and agricultural communities the country has always possessed a tenacious political continuity and a distinct cultural unity. Persia has always managed to absorb and use her conquerors—Alexander the Great, the Muslim Arabs and the Mongol hordes. Its rulers all inherited the same method of uniting the country—an authoritarian, widely publicised and quasi-divine kingship, which emerges, with differing royal symbolism, under the Abbasids, the Sassanians and reaches back beyond even the glories of Xerxes and Darius to the ruthless rulers of ancient Assyria.

The kings of Persia also inherited the same ancient rivalry with the west. Greece, Rome and Byzantium were their only cultural equals. It was a case of mutual fascination. These obsessive enemies learnt more from each other (particularly in administrative devices and forms of faith) than they cared to admit.

Ardashir

In 224 Ardashir, grandson of Sassan the founder of the Sassanian dynasty, deposed Artabanus V, last of the Parthian kings who had ruled Persia since the second century B.C. The new king of kings (the title was practical rather than grandiose) set about strengthening an existing tradition of state bureaucracy which owed something to Persia's Greek conquerors of the past. He replaced local warlords and hereditary satraps with royal governors who could be dismissed at will. He curbed their ill-disciplined private armies and placed himself at the head of the Persian forces.

The Sassanians were assiduous propagandists of their own kinship. They placarded their achievements in great rock-cut inscriptions and reliefs of cowering captives which still overlook the caravan roads of the country. Their coins, which every man handled, repeated the imperial slogans. Their sumptuous palace decoration inspired the mystery of their rule as viceroys of the divine Ormuzd, the spirit of good.

The magi

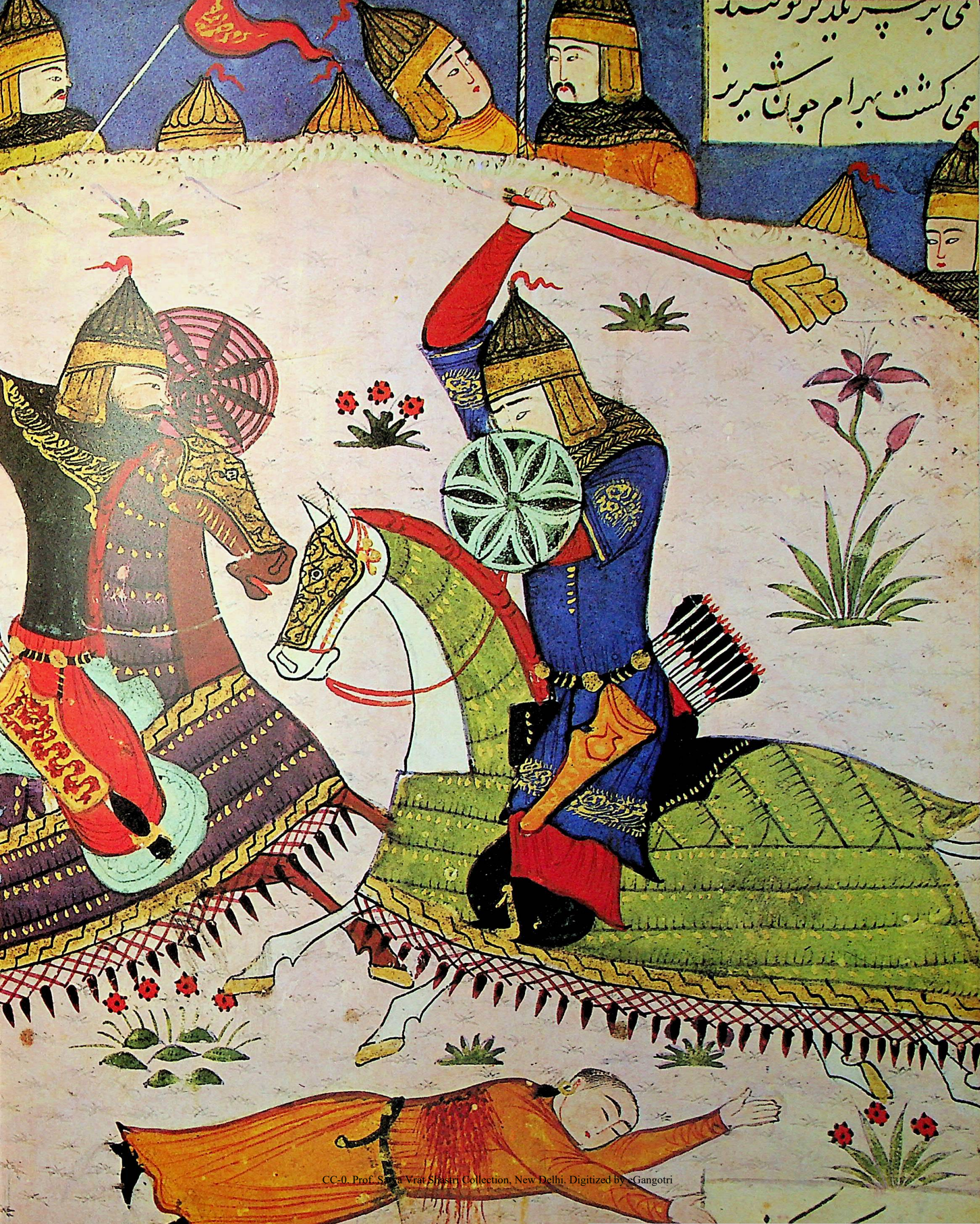
The Sassanians used the magi, their Mazdean priesthood, to focus loyalty upon their throne. The Mazdean faith was based on the belief that the universe was under the dominion of two opposing principles and its prophet was Zoroaster. In the fire-temples of Persia the spirits of good and evil, light and darkness (Ormuzd and Ahriman) fought their battle and claimed impartial devotion.

Mazdeanism was adulterated with local polytheistic cults in many parts of Persia

Right: Khosrow II, the last great Sassanian ruler, faced a major revolt led by Bahram Chubina. Although he is shown here in single combat with the rebel, it was only with Byzantine help that he was able to defeat him in 591. Khosrow's debt to the Byzantine emperor did not prevent him from taking Syria and carrying off the True Cross, the major relic of Christendom, from Jerusalem. Persian manuscript. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)



می بر سپر بلیدر نوسد
می کشت برام جون شیرین



and the prophet Mani of the third-century A.D. adapted it further. His religion, Manicheanism, spread beyond the confines of Persia and had its most remote adherents 1,000 years later among the medieval Christian heretics of Europe.

The magi controlled important temple revenues and estates. Another recognised class of society was the warrior landowners, semi-feudatories who dominated the provinces when Sassanian power was weak. Administration, religion and soldiering were the recognised professions and the merchant and clerkly classes were remarkably insignificant.

Of the shepherds and peasants who pursued their dreary seasonal cycle of work we know little, for the Sassanians have seen to it that we learn of their rule largely through their own official version of events—a chronicle of conquests and a record of administrative decrees.

Shapur I and his successors

The reign of Shapur I (241–272) marks the early heyday of the dynasty. His armies overran Armenia, Antioch and Syria and wrecked the Roman military stronghold of Dura Europos. Shapur's triumph came in 260 when he captured the Roman emperor Valerian and his invading army of 70,000 legionaries. Roman imperial prestige in the east never recovered from this shattering defeat. Shapur advertised the fact in rock-carvings and official paintings throughout Persia. The Roman captives were settled in Khuzistan where part of the extensive irrigation works which they dug is said to be still in use today.

The unity of the Sassanian state depended largely upon the character of individual kings. Shapur's successors were largely undistinguished and quarrelsome. They were finally reduced to crowning Shapur II in a quaint ceremony in 309 when he was still in his mother's womb—the magi had guaranteed a male child. Unexpectedly the second Shapur survived to reign for almost seventy years of almost constant warfare with Rome. The Roman emperor Julian the Apostate came to avenge Valerian's defeat, only to be lured to his own mysterious death in Persia.

During the long reign of Shapur II Christianity became the official religion of Rome in fact as well as name. Julian was the last emperor to look back with longing to the pagan past. Now Christian Armenia turned from Persia to Rome as its protector. Accordingly Shapur persecuted Christians in Persia and encouraged the local Christian heresies of the east which so perplexed the bishops and bureaucrats of Constantinople.

Persia and Christianity

Persia became the home of one of the separated Churches of the east—the Chaldean,

more usually called Nestorian. Nestorius, the patriarch of Constantinople, had been condemned in 431 for the heretical notion that the divine and human persons could be distinguished. In fact we now know that Nestorius was probably not a 'Nestorian' and that the 'Nestorians' of Persia had little concept of the heresy.

Ostracised by European Christians, the Persian 'Nestorians' turned to evangelise parts of India and central Asia. Their achievements were astonishing and by 774 they were able to set up a monument in China to record the triumph of Christianity. When in the thirteenth century the Mongols united their old mission lands the 'Nestorian' patriarch in Persia counted some 230 dioceses all over the east in his spiritual dominion. Nonetheless, the Church was virtually extinguished in persecution and bloodshed by Timur's Mongols at the end of the fourteenth century. Very few representatives of this, the most ancient of Christian heresies, survive in the east today.

Khosrow I

Most of Shapur II's immediate successors were feeble and overshadowed by their leading ministers. The separatist tendencies of Persia reasserted themselves. The Maz-

deans challenged the state religion, the Hephthalite (White Hun) tribes lorded it in the mountains and the local nobility detached outlying provinces. It was Khosrow I (531–579) who restored the old Sassanian authority and ushered in the empire's most splendid period. He perfected the machinery of state government, continued the irrigation schemes begun by Shapur I and subdued the Huns in the north and the Yemenis in the south.

The Sassanians always regarded their western conquests as the most significant and, inevitably, Khosrow sought victory

Below: the memory of the Macedonian conqueror, Alexander the Great, lived on in the lands he once ruled. Many centuries later Persian artists depicted the splendour of his court. Persian manuscript. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)

Right: the magnificence of the Persian court spread even to the battlefield. Here a later artist depicts a victory of Khosrow II over rebels in a manner which suggests a festival occasion. Persian manuscript. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)





over the Roman (now Byzantine) Empire. In 540 he took Antioch and entered into the final, protracted struggle for Armenia which, with its chain of garrison fortresses and unreliable inhabitants, was the key to the Byzantine defence system.

Some strongholds, especially to the south of the Caucasus, changed hands almost annually. Armenian and Laz rulers exploited the situation for over a century until 651, when peace favourable to the Byzantines was finally signed, only because the Sasanians had themselves lost their empire.

In Ferdowsi's eleventh-century Persian work, the *Epic of the Kings*, Khosrow figures as the most heroic and attractive of all Sassanian rulers. His love for the exquisite Shirin, his spirited Christian (and possibly Greek) concubine, has passed into Persian romance. It was Shirin who, it is said, first fielded an entire harem in the Persian aristocratic sport of polo.

At Ctesiphon Khosrow chose a Byzantine architect to create the most splendid palace in the world. His offspring ruled for only a few more decades from this palace, but its ruins at Ctesiphon are still astonishing. Here the greatest unsupported brick vault in the world, almost a hundred feet wide and over a hundred feet high, stands in the desert over the banqueting hall of Khosrow.

The end of the Sassanids

The energies of the Sassanian Empire were burnt out by Khosrow's grandson, the avaricious and overweening Khosrow II. He sent his generals to fight their way to Chalcedon and threaten Heraclius' Constantinople across the narrow waters of the Bosphorus. But the Byzantine emperor penetrated deep into Persia and in 628 Khosrow II was hounded to his death. 'The realm was coming to an end; from every side foemen made their appearance', wrote Ferdowsi.

After centuries of noble rivalry with Rome the Sassanian dynasty met an unexpected and ignominious end. Eight years after the invasion by Heraclius, the patriarch of Constantinople, it was the Arabs and not the Byzantines who finally crushed Sassanian Persia, and in 637 gazed with amazement upon the palace of Ctesiphon. Yazdegerd II (632-651), the last king of kings upon whom the glory of Ormuzd shone, was murdered in obscurity at Merv.

According to tradition some Persians fled to India, where the fire-worshipping Parsees still number their years from Yazdegerd's accession. The *Epic of the Kings* concludes:

'The standards of the kings of the world came to an end. Gold vanished and farthings took its place. The unseemly became good and the good unseemly; the road to Hell issued forth from Paradise. The countenance of the revolving firmament was changed, and it withheld its love from free men altogether.'

The rise of Islam

The children of Shem: desert warriors make war in God's name and forge a vast empire; the rivalry of different sects; culture and decay.

The historic distinction between desert and fertile land is at its sharpest in the Arabian Peninsula. Driven by hunger and poverty, successive waves of the desert people of the heart of Arabia have moved outwards to raid the green lands of the Fertile Crescent. A network of family relationships linked the peoples who roamed the sparse pastures with their cousins who had become farmers on the fringes of the desert.

Some inland parts of the peninsula are by no means infertile. Small walled towns with shaded gardens marked the oases and the peninsula was crossed by great caravan routes. By Mohammed's day in the seventh century A.D., Mecca and the western and central lands of the Hejaz had inherited control of the great route north to Syria. Mecca's trade then may have been worth 300,000 gold pounds a year.

The Arabs and their faiths

The Arabs were traders and raiders. Mohammed's secular career reflects the old pattern.

The Arabs are simply those who lived in Arabia. Their legendary ancestor was Shem and their first prophet was Abraham. They are the Jews of the early books of the Old Testament. Their language is the most important survival of the old Semitic tongue.

In the seventh century A.D., when the economic centres had moved south from Petra and Palmyra to Mecca and Medina, three leading faiths can be distinguished among their numerous local cults. The first was a compound of animistic observances—the veneration of sacred trees, stones and wells—and the recognition of a supreme being, the Allah. These heathen had no concept of an afterlife. The Prophet, with his vivid preaching of a Heaven and a Hell, was utterly opposed to them, though he adapted their ancient pilgrimage to the sacred black meteorite which had fallen out of Heaven at Mecca.

Economically, perhaps even numerically, the Jews were the most important. They dominated the iron and armament trades. Beside the black stone at Mecca stood one of their holiest shrines, the Kaaba, Abraham's windowless house. The Prophet, uneasily recognising his great theological

debt to Judaism and the powerful attraction of the Kaaba, condemned the Jews energetically.

The Arab Christian tribes represented an eastern Christianity which stood closer to local beliefs than to the official dogmas of Rome and Constantinople. Christians shared with the Jews, and even the pagans, of Arabia, the ancient and profound conviction that there was only one God and that He was indivisible. This belief became the cornerstone of Islam. The Trinitarian debates of the seven General Councils of the Church disturbed the Arab Christians. Their shameful exploitation by Byzantine officials alienated them even further from the west.

Like the Sassanian rulers of Persia, the first Caliphs of Islam made the most of Eastern Christian disillusionment with the politics and tricky theology of Byzantium. The armies of Islam could not have conquered the Middle East so rapidly if they had not been generally welcomed by local Christians. By the mid-seventh century the national minorities of the Levant—such as the Syrians and Egyptian Copts—had reawakened. Persia and Byzantium had fought themselves to a standstill. Arabia was restless. Its Jews, Christians and pagans were seeking a supreme god. For them Mohammed provided a definition of the Godhead. The subject peoples of the Byzantine East were seeking an identity. For them the Muslim armies brought at least a solution.

Allah is the One God

Mohammed was born in Mecca about 570. He belonged to the leading tribe of the city, the Quraysh. His own family was respectable but not wealthy. The man himself is largely lost in the historic eastern interpretation of the role of a prophet, but, as with other visionaries, certain stages of development do seem clear enough.

Until his early forties Mohammed was an affluent, but apparently unremarkable, trad-

Right: with the unfailing fertility of the oases and the remarkable endurance of the camel, the Bedouin were able to maintain an existence for centuries in areas where others could never have survived. Note the date-palms shown on the right. Thirteenth-century Arab manuscript. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)





er of Mecca. Then in the year 610 while asleep in a cave, he had a vision of the archangel Gabriel. This left Mohammed with an overwhelming conviction that he had a mission to perform. This compulsion was strengthened in a series of religious experiences throughout the remainder of the Prophet's life. There are hints that he endured what Western mystics have described as 'the dark night of the soul', a period of self-doubt and torment.

During these obscure first years of his mission in Mecca, Mohammed's teaching of the One God found ready listeners. However, the materialist and conservative merchants of the city opposed his condemnation of local cults (with which he eventually compromised in a few but significant details), and mocked the apocalyptic new preacher for his concept of philanthropy on earth and divine judgement and a life hereafter.

The Koran

Throughout the last twenty years of his life Mohammed recorded his moments of illumination when he was inspired by divine teaching. This he transmitted in the form of short verses which were gathered after his death to form the Koran, almost the earliest example of Arabic literature.

The earliest revelations are more purely religious, but the Prophet went on to develop a complete moral code.

The overriding message is of the unity of the One God, revealed through scripture to the uncomprehending Jews and Christians, who must be led back to the simplicity of the laws of Abraham. God is infinite and imminent, closer to a man than the vein of his neck. God is merciful and compassionate.

The Koran emphasises the virtue of human charity and inspires a sense of social obligation which is felt by all Muslims and is reflected in their political institutions. Mosques are commonly embedded within a complex of schools, asylums, hospitals, baths, almshouses and charitable institutions whose upkeep is part of the duty of a Muslim.

Doomsday was forewarned in scenes of unexampled grandeur. The souls of the devout would be weighed in the balance and human injustice and oppression would lead to a Hell which Mohammed depicted in the vivid colours of a revivalist. Heaven on the other hand, was a luxurious watered garden enhanced with every fleshy delight.

The Koran moves from passages of mundane condemnations of idolatry and immodesty and injunctions against the consumption of pork and wine, to moments of

high ecstasy and beauty:

God is the light of heaven and earth. It is lit from a blessed olive tree neither eastern nor western. Its oil would almost shine forth if no fire touched it. Light upon light: God guideth to His light whom He will.

The Muslim code

The duties of a Muslim became clear-cut in the years after the Prophet's death. He must conform to a moral code and be charitable. Five times a day he performs his religious exercises at the unforgettable summons of the muezzins who answer their cries from minaret to minaret:

'God is most great. I testify that there is no God but Allah. I testify that Mohammed is God's Prophet. Come to prayer. Come to security. God is most great.'

Through brilliant political insight Mohammed tempered his denunciation of idolatry and polytheism by retaining and transforming the most sacred of Arabian cults—that of the pilgrimage to the black stone and to the Kaaba in Mecca. Every devout Muslim performs the *haji*, or pilgrimage, at least once in his life. He passes through a period of purification and visits the scenes of the Prophet's life.



Without the support of Mecca, the economic and political centre of Arabia, Mohammed could not hope to launch his faith. Mecca however, was unreceptive. Five years of teaching there gave him notoriety but few adherents. In 622 the Prophet fled to Mecca's lesser rival, Medina, 280 miles to the north-east, with his flock of some seventy-five of the first Muslims. The event, called the *hijrah*, or 'emigration' is the turning-point in the history of Islam, and from that year, 622, the Muslim calendar is dated.

Finding support in Medina Mohammed led expeditions of his followers south against Mecca. By the year six of the *hijrah* he had surrounded Mecca and an armistice was signed. As a result the nomads of the desert felt free to join the Prophet's standard. Only some Jewish tribes had misgivings and were massacred.

Mohammed entered Mecca in triumph for the pilgrimage of the year eight of the *hijrah*. In the remaining two years of his life he became master of the Hejaz. Submission to the Prophet's rule now preceded conversion to Allah's law. By the year ten of the *hijrah* (632), when Mohammed died, his armies had carried the green flags of Islam to the borders of the Byzantine Empire.

The holy war

The word Islam means 'submission (to Allah)'. For the Muslim the world is divided into the Land of Islam and the Land of War which had been created by the necessity of subduing the infidel. The early Muslim armies which challenged the Byzantine and Persian Empires combined a religious fervour with a military zeal which Mohammed had already described in his years at Medina as the Jihad or Holy War. The Jihad proved irresistible because Islam had emerged so early as a state as well as a faith. In fact it conquered as a state.

It is a myth that Muslim armies forced conversion at the sword's point. To the disaffected Christians of the Byzantine East they offered a semi-privileged status in return for recognition of Arab political supremacy. Sensing their cultural inferiority in the Mediterranean and in Persia, the Arabs were reluctant to share their faith with the peoples they conquered, for Islam was their sole and distinctive advantage, the mark of a conqueror.

Only later, when the Arab military aristocracy who had ridden out of the desert found that they had to rule as well as conquer, and so had to use the existing bureaucratic and commercial traditions of their new lands, did Muslims begin to mingle with their subjects. When that stage came, great numbers of their subjects became Muslim themselves through voluntary conversion. It meant the end of Arab supremacy in Islam.

Mohammed's successors were called

caliphs, or deputies of the Prophet of God. They were also heirs to an empire which swiftly outgrew its origins in the Hejaz. As one conquest followed another—Damascus and Syria in 634, Alexandria and the Egyptian cornlands in 641—the caliphate became a glittering political prize. The Prophet left no sons, and disputes among his successors dictated Muslim politics for centuries to come.

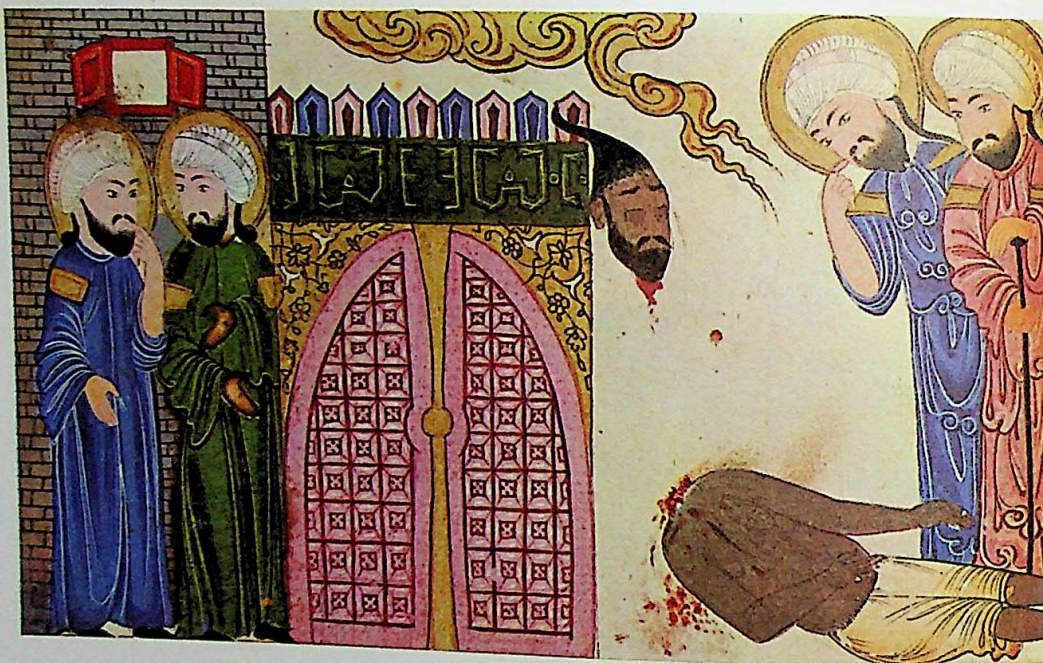
The formation of sects

Later Abbasid chroniclers have relegated the Umayyads, impious caliphs, to a sort of Muslim Dark Ages. In fact they were responsible for the first galloping expansion of Islam and for the creation of an empire out of the early state in the Hejaz. At Damascus, Muawiya, the fifth caliph, established a kind of dynastic monarchy to match those of the Byzantines and Persians. He

shadowy seventh caliph, Ismail. The Assassin Ismailiyas of Syria and Persia added a new word to western vocabularies in the thirteenth century, for assassination was their peculiar and effective political weapon.

In some ways the sects differed only in a minor degree, the distinctions being little more than those between the friars and the monks of medieval western Europe. In other ways they resembled the different aspects of Christendom—Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant.

Behind the differences lie a host of non-religious factors: social, economic and, above all, ethnic. For the Arabs were becoming thin on the ground in their own empire and therefore clung tenaciously to their special privileges. Although the Umayyads removed the caliphate from Medina to Damascus they prolonged the Arab hold over the empire by institutional devices. Arabic became the official language; provin-



and his successors ruled from Syria from 661 until 750, while Mecca itself gradually became a simple cult centre.

The speedy conquests of Islam very soon led to internal divisions. There were the puritan Kharijites and the procrastinating but tolerant Murjites. The most vigorous sect to oppose the orthodox Sunnis (who form the majority of the Muslim world) were the Shiites, the followers of Ali, the fourth caliph, whose entire family was killed by the Umayyads in 680. The Shiite sect was born in the civil wars between the fourth and fifth caliphs, but it was also a symptom of the growing unrest among non-Arab Muslims who fought in the armies of Islam as second-class citizens. The Shiites survive in great numbers today, especially in the eastern Islamic states.

The Syrian Druzes belong to the same tradition, but the most exotic of the Shiite offshoots are the Ismailiyas, followers of a

cial governors were Arab; Koranic law was established; and a new coinage was adopted for the whole empire. The monograms stamped on the dirhems proclaimed the oneness of Allah and the universal mission of His faith.

For a century the Arabs were able to control the administration of the empire, but at the risk of compromise. Jews and Christians stood second in their religious and social hierarchy, paying a poll and land tax for the privilege, and escaping the burden of military service.

However, in established states, such as Sassanian Persia, the Arabs could only take over existing and long-perfected systems of government. Persian local feudalism survived. The old nobility clung to Zoroastrianism, but the local aristocracy became increasingly converted to Islam and thus renewed their power. From the Sassanians the Umayyad caliphs inherited a political

symbolism and imperial style. Thwarted of their aims to overrun the Byzantine Empire, they began to adopt the role of Byzantium's old rival, the king of kings of Persia.

The expansion of Islam

The first half-century of Umayyad rule saw the greatest conquests of the still unified empire. In the west all the African coast up to Morocco was wrested from the Berbers by 710. Visigothic Spain was overrun by 713 in a three-year conquest. It took seven centuries for the Christians of Spain to recover the territories they had lost.

In the east the armies of Islam penetrated the Indus valley and Sind in 712. Two years later they were in Kashgar, on the fringes of the Chinese Empire.

There the conquests stopped. Later Islamic history has nothing to compare with these decades of expansion. In fact, the huge

Muslim Empire began to contract within a century of the Prophet's death. Why? To say that Byzantium was the shield of western Europe against Islam during the vital formative period of western medieval society is only half true. Byzantium had in fact much more in common with its Syrian enemies than with its Frankish co-religionists. Nonetheless, the words of one authority on Byzantium remain true: 'It is hardly an exaggeration to say that the civilisation of western Europe is a by-product of the Byzantine Empire's will to survive.'

There is no doubt that one of the great turning-points in European and Islamic history is the Arab failure to take Constantinople by sea in the siege of 717-18. It proved to be more than seven centuries before a Muslim conqueror, Mehmet II, set foot in Constantinople.

Lesser encounters marked the bounds of Arab expansion in the east and west at this

time. The Chinese drove the Arabs back to Ferghana in 715 and in 732 Charles Martel routed a small Muslim exploratory expedition at Poitiers, in the heart of France. The tide of conquest had turned early.

Islamic culture

At Damascus the Umayyads had to create a culture and machinery of government to

Below and left: episodes in the conquest of Persia by the Arabs. Persian resistance ended with the battle of Nihawand in 642. Shiraz, Ispahan and Susa then fell to the conquerors and the last Sassanian ruler died ten years later. Miniatures. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)



match their new empire. In administration the Arab military occupation was quickly superseded by local rule. From an early period the Islamic states ruled their national and religious minorities through their own courts and leaders.

In art and architecture the Umayyads adapted the existing Greco-Roman and oriental traditions as the Byzantines had done before them. Here, though, eastern forms were naturally dominant. The earliest important Islamic monument is the Dome of the Rock, a wooden cupola surmounting an octagon enclosing the site of Abraham's sacrifice (and the Prophet's ascension), which was built in Jerusalem in 691. In Damascus in 706 the Umayyads converted the fourth-century basilica of St John the Baptist (itself once the Temple of Jupiter) into one of the first congregational mosques.

The essentials of Islamic religious architecture became clear during the Umayyad period, but its forms were derived from numerous local styles. Many of the great mosques of Islam are converted Christian churches, recognisable because the *mihrab* has to stand at an angle from the eastern apse, sometimes on the southern wall.

The power of the Umayyad caliphs was too closely restricted to Arab supremacy in the empire. Converts to Islam, especially in Persia, found that they did not enjoy the same legal and social privileges as their Arab conquerors. Unrest grew in the fourth decade of the eighth century and found leaders in the family of Abbas, the Prophet's uncle. In 750 Saffah, 'the shedder of blood' defeated Marwan II, the last Umayyad caliph and entered Damascus as the first ruler in a new dynasty, the Abbasid.

The Abbasids of Baghdad

The soundly based Abbasid claim to the caliphate was to be exploited by means of the skilful propaganda of their agents, such as Abu Muslim, who had been leading what virtually amounted to a Persian revolt against the Umayyads since 746. The resurgence of Persia and Mesopotamia under the banner of the new caliphate marks the passing of the initial impetus and control of Islam from Arab hands. As one caliph is said to have remarked:

'The Persians ruled for a thousand years and did not need us (Arabs) even for a day; we have been ruling for one or two centuries and cannot do without them for an hour.'

The new caliphate clearly satisfied a need among Arab converts. It held to the principle that public life should be regulated by Islam, but was fairly impartial about the heresies which divided the faithful. All Muslims could regard it as their state, and the old leaders of the lands which the Arabs had conquered could fashion its government according to their own patterns. Thus

it was that the Abbasid caliphate was able to last until the Mongol sack of Baghdad in 1258, a period of some five centuries.

The outward symbol of the new regime was the transference of the capital from Damascus to the small Christian village of Baghdad in Mesopotamia. Here a succession of three brilliant caliphs devised a new administrative system and Baghdad entered upon a period of economic prosperity.

The administrative system owed much to the old Sassanian government of Persia, and, indeed, Persians now supplanted Arabs in the highest posts. The caliphate itself was soon hedged about by a palace ritual in which old Persian ceremonies were revived. The government fell increasingly into the hands of viziers or chief ministers, who established their own dynasties.

Ministries (*divans*) were set up for the army, finance, postal services and provincial administration. The postal system was particularly elaborate. Semaphore towers signalled from Morocco to Baghdad, desert





lighthouses were built, and a regular carrier pigeon service was initiated. Local postmasters were used as intelligence agents.

It was, however, an essentially different government from that of the Umayyads. First, the caliphs, surrounded by traditional Persian luxury, became as remote as had the old Sassanians. The vigorous local aristocracies which now seized power in the provinces and which ran the ministries in Baghdad were bound to divide the empire into a loose confederation of warring states. The caliph himself became a sort of cult figure, a living relic to be placed on view on holy days.

This development was postponed until

Left: the annunciation of the angel Gabriel to Mohammed marks the beginning of the Prophet's mission. Fear of idolatry led early Muslims to forbid the representation of the human figure, but, through contact with other cultures the rule was later relaxed. The Persians in particular produced exquisite illuminated manuscripts. From the Ascension of Mohammed. Persian. Fifteenth century. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)

Below: a preacher expounds the Koran from the pulpit (mimber), which stands in mosques close to the prayer niche (mihrab). (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)







Left: the victorious Arabs extended their empire by sea as well as by land. Their swift, lateen-rigged ships besieged Constantinople itself in 717-18. The vessel depicted here has distinct affinities with ancient Egyptian boats. The Byzantine navy was larger, more powerful and better equipped. Whole provinces in western Asia Minor and in the Aegean were devoted to its maintenance and also served as recruiting grounds. In addition, Byzantine ships carried the terrifying Greek fire. Thirteenth-century Arab manuscripts. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)

809 by three great caliphs: al Mansur (754-775), al Mahdi, his son (775-785), and Harun al Rashid, his grandson (786-809). Each surpassed his predecessor and the peak of achievement of the Abbasid caliphate came within half a century of its foundation.

Trade, both in the eastern Mediterranean and in the Indian Ocean, recovered. Arab dhows sailed from the Moluccas to Ormuz, and from Beirut to Almeria. Great urban centres grew up with their covered bazaars and merchant gilds. Arab translations from Greek and Syriac of the classical Greek and Roman texts of geography, natural history and the profane sciences gave the Muslim world a lead over Europe in scientific knowledge which was not lost until the fifteenth century.

The period of decay

Even during Harun al Rashid's magnificent reign, signs of disintegration were becoming apparent. Harun planned to divide his empire into eastern and western halves and it was only after the civil war which followed his death in 809 that it was nominally reunited under al Maman.

Persia and Khorosan were especially independent. From the early ninth century local dynasties there (the Tahirids, the Saffarids and then the Samanids) effectively dissociated the eastern half of the empire from Baghdad. Deprived of the revenues of its richest provinces the capital ceased to flourish and Harun al Rashid's palaces fell into elegant decay. The change was by no means a simple downward progression over the next centuries, but was marked by a number of persistent symptoms, political and social.

The old Arab military aristocracy was finally eliminated in the 830s. The caliphs and their viziers had to look to a new class to fight their wars and officer their armies. They were obliged to choose their most stubborn enemies to the east, the Turks.

Throughout the Abbasid period Turkic peoples passed into the Muslim armies to turn them eventually into their own war machine. The Turks were happy to leave theological niceties to the caliphs, but here the Abbasids faced another centrifugal

tendency. Local heresies flourished in most provinces. Happily for the survival of the orthodox Sunni caliphate the Shiites were themselves divided. One Shiite group founded a state in the Yemen in 897, which was ruled by imams of the family of the Prophet until the middle of the twentieth century.

Abbasid governors showed a growing reluctance to retire from the provinces to which they had been assigned after their duties were over. Spain was an Umayyad outpost. The Aghlabids detached North Africa. In 831 they captured Palermo and their rule in Sicily until the Norman invasion of 1060 gave that island's culture much of its peculiar flavour. In 909 a Shiite group led by the Fatimids declared the end of Abbasid rule in Egypt. In 973 the Fatimids founded Cairo as a rival to Baghdad.

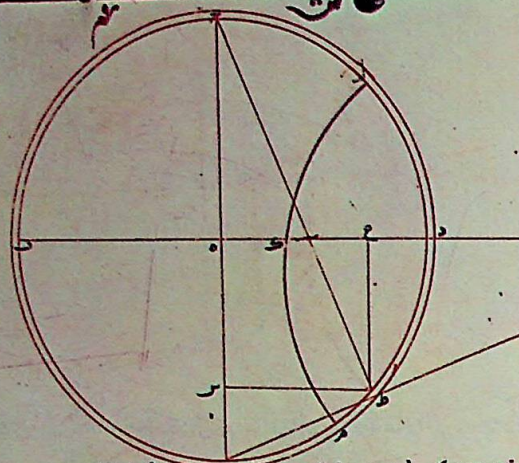
With Persia effectively lost to the rule of Baghdad and Egypt in rebellion under the Fatimids, the caliphate's real authority shrank to Mesopotamia. The later history of the Abbasids is one of a struggle with Egypt for the intervening lands of Syria. When there was a period of equilibrium, or weakness in Cairo and Baghdad, local lords in Syria and Palestine assumed practical independence. It was during one of these periods, in 1099, that the crusaders were able to capture part of the eastern Mediterranean coastal lands and Jerusalem. However, the precarious Latin outpost was endangered whenever either Mesopotamia or Egypt moved to attack the other.

There were other signs of decay. The status of women declined. Respectable women were now obliged to wear veils in public and the idea of the harem was evolved. Moreover, although many of the component peoples of Islam used the religious legitimacy and political self-effacement of the caliphate to establish their own local hegemony, many of the more downtrodden among the subject populations became restless. In the marshes of Mesopotamia the gipsy-like Jats, on the Persian Gulf the negro Zanjis and in Egypt the Copts (leading workers in the declining papyrus industry), all led local revolts against their masters.

The Abbasids failed to establish their rule in two significant areas which lay on the frontiers of Islam and Christendom—Spain and Asia Minor. This gave them a curious remoteness in western European eyes. Although there were occasional military, trade and diplomatic contacts, western ideas about Islam were limited and muddled.

For a century or so western Christians recognised a papal document as being genuine by the Arabic monogram which was impressed, like a watermark, upon it, since Rome imported its paper from Aghlabid Sicily. It is a matter of speculation how many popes realised that this trademark on their documents in fact proclaimed that Allah was the One God and Mohammed His Prophet.

مَنْ شَاءَ



Left: a page from an Arab treatise on geometry. The Arabs excelled in both geometry and astronomy. They translated the works of Euclid, Archimedes and Ptolemy. The word 'algebra' is Arabic and it is from the Arabs that we obtained our present system of numerals. Arab manuscript. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)

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تَلَفُّظِ الْعُقُولِ وَهَذَا إِلَى تَعْدِيدِ سِيَاطِ الْخَطِّ فِي الْوَقَائِلِ الْخَوَالِدِ وَجِلْدَةِ الْكَلَامِ
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يَتَفَقَّصُ بِأَصْلَحِ الْمَقَالِ وَبَعْدَهُ فَيَأْتِيهِ قَوْمٌ مِنَ الزَّلَّالِ فَأَتَانَا الْيَقِينُ



Below: the Arabs were also notable doctors. Tabiri's eleventh-century Paradise of Learning is an encyclopaedia of medical knowledge and Biruni's Book of Drugs, an Arabic pharmacopoeia. Surgery was less advanced than curative medicine. The scene below shows a Caesarian birth. Opium was used as an anaesthetic in the Byzantine and Arab worlds. Arab manuscript. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)



The Umayyads of Spain

When the first Abbasid caliph defeated the last Umayyad in 750, he was not able entirely to obliterate the old dynasty. One member, Abd al-Rahman, escaped westwards. He reached Spain in 755.

Spain lay on the periphery of the Muslim world. Even during the period of the early caliphate it had shown its own separatism, for communications with Damascus were poor. Ostracised by the Abbasids, Abd al-Rahman founded, or rather re-founded, an Umayyad state which gave Spain its quite distinct Muslim culture. Abd al-Rahman himself had an impeccable Arab ancestry going back to the Quraysh of Mecca. Spain had largely been conquered by Berbers rather than Arabs.

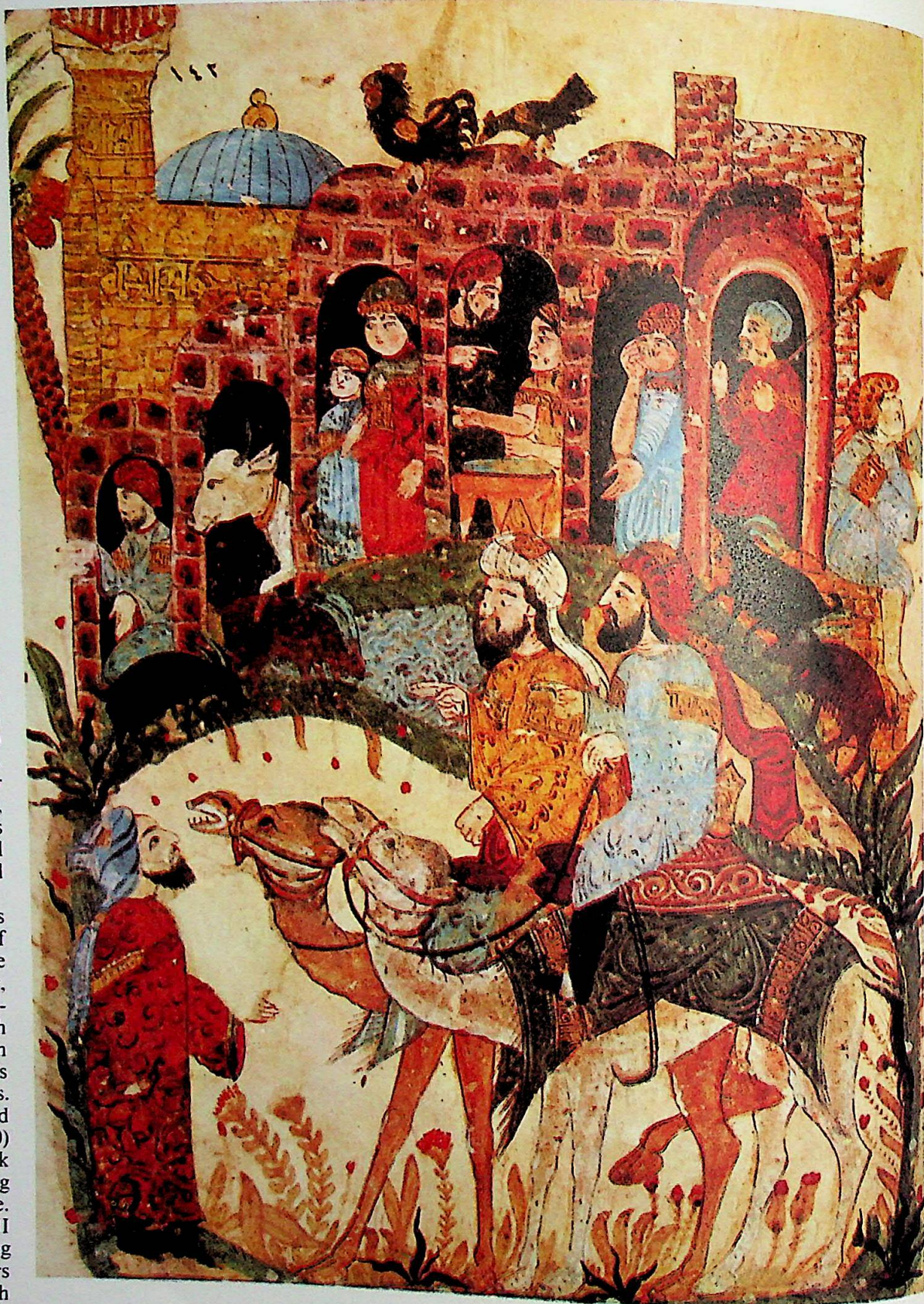
The subject population was not entirely Christian and it included the largest Jewish minority in Europe. Thus there arose a lively interchange of Muslim, Christian and Jewish cultures. This gave medieval Spain a remarkably tolerant and enlightened character, which encouraged experiment in government and in art and learning.

Abd al-Rahman founded his capital at Cordoba in 756. From Spain the widest Umayyad conquests even took in Provence and parts of Italy, but these were soon lost. In northern Spain a few pockets of Christian resistance survived. Slowly they expanded. The Christian reconquest of Spain took over seven centuries to complete. However, during a period of 300 years the Umayyads brought the country to a peak of political and economic achievement, and stimulated intellectual and artistic creativity.

Abd al-Rahman and his first successors encouraged agriculture and the planting of rice fields and orange groves. Spain became an important source for slaves and later, armaments. An individual style of architecture developed—the horse-shoe arch being its particular feature. Separated from the rest of the Muslim world, the Umayyads patronised Orthodox Muslim theologians.

However, their schools at Granada and Saragossa (lost to the Christians in 1230) were also concerned with ancient Greek learning. Averroës (1126–98) wrote, among other works, a commentary on Aristotle. Eventually the great library of Hakam II was to be burnt book by book; but during the early Middle Ages, Western scholars had to go to Spain to discover, through Muslim intermediaries, the learning of the ancients.

Early in the eleventh century the Umayyads of Spain died out and the contracting Muslim state was divided into petty emirates. The Almoravids and the Almohades retreated before the new kings of Leon and Castile. Semi-legendary crusaders like El Cid (died 1099) conquered the central plateau. Toledo fell in 1085. Four centuries later the Christian kingdoms, united under Ferdinand and Isabella, drove out the last Moors.



Above: the Abbasids moved the capital of the caliphate from Damascus to Baghdad, where their splendid palaces and mosques became the wonder of the orient. They inherited a Persian tradition of luxury, described in the tales of the Thousand and One Nights and depicted in the scenes above. Arab manuscript. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)

BYZANTIUM, PERSIA AND THE ARAB CONQUESTS TO A.D. 1000

	Byzantium	Persia	Islam	The West
200	Constantinople founded (330) Arcadius (395–408) Theodosius II (408–50)	Sassanid dynasty founded (226) Shapur I (241–72) Shapur II (309–79) Bahram V (420–40)		Valerian (253–60) Diocletian (284–305) Christianity adopted by Constantine (313) Division of Roman Empire (395) End of Western Roman Empire (476)
500	Justinian (527–65)		Sassanid conquest of southern Arabia	Death of Clovis (511)
	Reconquest of Italy and North Africa	Khosrow I (531–79) Khosrow II (590–628)	Birth of Mohammed (570)	Merovingians Gregory the Great (590–604)
600				
	Heraclius I (610–41) Defeat of the Persians Constantine IV (668–85)	Invasion of the Byzantine Empire (602–27) End of the Sassanids Arab conquest	The <i>hijrah</i> (622) Death of Mohammed (632) Muawiya caliphate (661) Umayyads of Damascus	Dagobert I (628–39) Pepin of Herstal (687–714)
700				
	Leo III the Isaurian (717–41) Arab advance checked The Iconoclasts	Persian revolt against the Umayyads Persian cultural influence on Islam	Conquest of Spain Islamic armies in Sind Muslims defeated at Poitiers (732) The Abbasids of Baghdad Harun al Rashid (786–809)	Charles Martel (715–41) Pepin the Short (751–68) Charlemagne (771–814)
800				
	Amorian dynasty Basil I (867–86) Macedonian dynasty	Taharid dynasty Growth of Shi'ite sect Saffarid dynasty	Arabs occupy Sicily and invade Italy Aghlabids in North Africa	Expansion of Scandinavia Varangians in Russia Danish invasions of England
900				
	Expansion of the empire Romanus I Lecapenus (919–44) Nicephorus II Phocas (963–69) John I Zimisces (925–76)	Samanid dynasty Buyid dynasty Ghaznevid dynasty	Caliphate of Cordoba Fatimids in Egypt	Otto the Great (962–73) Hugh Capet (987–96)
1000				

THE DECLINE OF BYZANTIUM; THE TURKS AND ISLAM

	Byzantium	The Turks	Islam	The West
1000	Basil II (976–1025) Schism with Rome Byzantines defeated by Turks at Manzikert (1071)	Seljuk Turks in Asia Minor Alp Arslan (1063–72)	Almoravids in North Africa Taifas kingdoms in Spain	Normans invade England (1066) Gregory VII (1078–85) First Crusade
1100	Alexius I Comnenus (1081–1118) Manuel I Comnenus (1143–80)	Seljuk Empire collapses (1157) Zangid sultanate of Syria Sultanate of Rum Empire of Khorezm	Almohades in Spain and Morocco	Second Crusade Frederick Barbarossa (1152–90) Henry II Plantagenet (1154–89) Assassination of Thomas Becket Third Crusade
1200	Crusaders capture Con- stantinople (1204) Latin Empire established Michael VIII Palaeologus (1259–82) Partial restoration of Byzantine Empire	Mongols defeat Seljuks of Rum (1243) Osman founds Ottoman Empire	Merinid dynasty in Morocco Mameluke rule begins in Egypt	Philip II Augustus (1180–1223) Fourth Crusade Albigensian Crusade Louis IX of France (1226–70)
1300	Andronicus II Palaeologus (1282–1332) Struggle against the Serbs John V Palaeologus (1341–91) Turkish encroachment	Turkish expansion in Asia Minor Murad I (1359–89) Orkhan (1326–59) Victories of Kossovo (1389) and Nicopolis (1396)	Burjite Mamelukes in Egypt	The Black Death in Europe Hundred Years' War Edward III of England (1327–77) Peasants' Revolt
1400	Decline of Byzantium Manuel II Palaeologus (1350–1425) Constantine XI Palaeologus (1448–53) Turks capture Constanti- nople (1453)	Bayezid I (1389–1402) Turks defeated by Timur (1402) Murad II (1421–51) Turkish conquests in South- western Europe Mehmet II (1451–81)	Wattasides in Morocco	Joan of Arc Medici family Leonardo da Vinci Discovery of America
1500				



The Indian world

Invading tribes bring their gods with them; a war-weary emperor encourages Buddhism; art and literature flourish; India's strength is drained in fighting off the barbarians; thousands are enslaved as the Muslims plunder a continent; Hinduism survives the conquest; Timur, last of the Mongol warlords.

India stands almost a continent in itself, a vast tract of land in the shape of a diamond, bordered on the southern sides by the Indian Ocean and on the northern by the Himalayas and its sister ranges.

From the tip of the diamond flow two great river systems, the Indus draining southwestward, and the Ganges to the southeast, creating the fertile Indo-Gangetic plain of North India, watered by the monsoon. South of the Vindhya Mountains, which bisect the diamond from east to west, lie the tablelands of the Deccan, and the lesser ranges of the Ghats which run down the coasts to meet above the lower tip, which is South India. Pendant from the diamond is a pearl—Ceylon.

Invasion from the north

The sea in ancient times isolated India from the rest of mankind, except for traders from the Hellenic and Roman worlds and the spice lands further east. It was through the mountain passes of the northwest that invasion came—from the entry of the Aryans in 1500 B.C. to the arrival of Muslim conquerors in A.D. 1000.

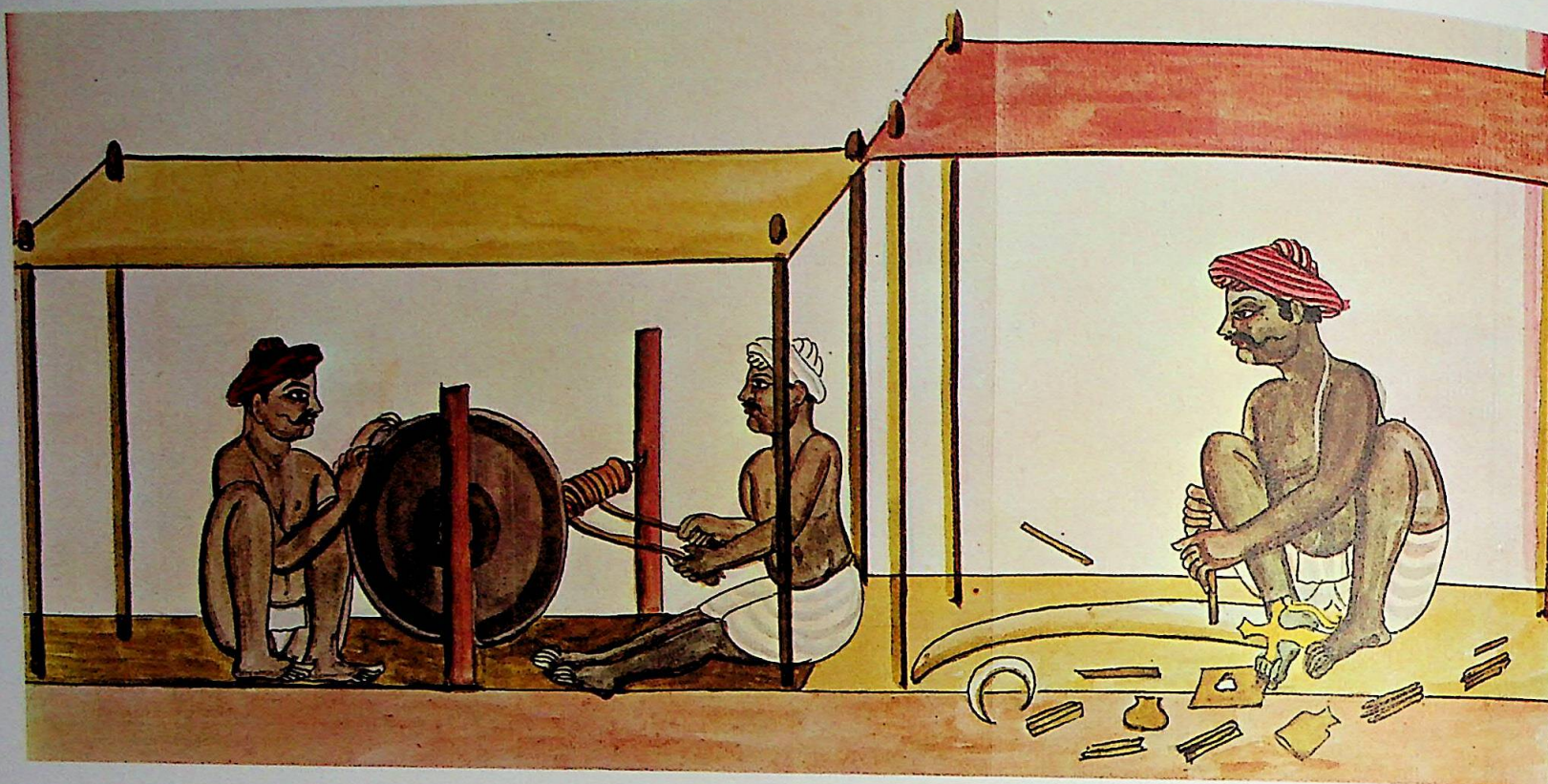
The Aryan invasion was not the first. Two great language families were already established in India: Munda, spoken by tribal people of eastern and central India, and Dravidian, spoken by the inhabitants of the Deccan and South India.

Between the arrival of the Aryans and

that of the Muslims the mountain passes admitted invaders of all kinds: Persians, Macedonians, Greeks, Scythians, Parthians, Kushans, and Huns. They ruled Indian lands for a time and withdrew, or stayed and lost their identity in the Indian melting-pot.

With the coming of the Aryans began the

Above: a scene from the Ramayana, an epic poem from the beginning of the Christian era. The good king Rama passes his exile with his wife and brother in an idyllic forest retreat. (British Museum, London.)



formation of ancient Indian civilisation. Aryan, Munda, Dravidian and foreign elements contributed. The civilisation which resulted has, without military conquest, enriched the world. Its national religion, Hinduism, is still vigorous in the land of its birth; its international religion, Buddhism, has spread all over the Far East and South-east Asia. Its writings and its architecture have shaped the culture of Southeast Asia and Ceylon. Its numerical notation—the nine symbols and the zero we mistakenly call Arabic—has been adopted the world over.

With the coming of Islam, a religion it could not absorb into Hinduism, the history of ancient India closes. Thereafter Indian civilisation developed under the influence of new ideas from Persia and the Middle East working on the ancient heritage. That heritage was transformed, but it persists.

The Indus Valley civilisation

In the nineteen-twenties archaeologists began unearthing the remains of a great civilisation which preceeded the coming of the Aryans. Its two main cities, Mohenjodaro in Sind and Harappa in the Punjab, have been extensively excavated, and as many as a hundred other sites have been found which belong to the same civilisation. This civilisation extended along the greater part of the Indus to the upper Gangetic watershed, some 1000 miles in length, and commanded 800 miles of seaboard in both directions from the Indus delta.

The Indus folk were confirmed city-dwellers. The houses of the more well-to-do had courtyards and bathrooms. The elab-

orate system of covered drains with man-holes and soakpits, the rubbish chutes and public wells show an advanced appreciation of the hygienic requirements of city life. The gridiron pattern of their main streets is in striking contrast with the meandering streets of their Mesopotamian contemporaries.

Above the city rose a citadel on a platform of mud brick, walled and bastioned, enclosing (at Mohenjodaro) a pillared hall and a great bath of brick sealed with bitumen. North of the citadel was a workers' compound and the granaries which housed the Indus peoples' main form of subsistence and, perhaps, tribute.

Steatite seals, many of them masterpieces of the engraver's art, have been found in great quantities. They depict the gods and animals (chiefly the humped cattle so characteristic of India) with short inscriptions which have not yet been deciphered.

For several centuries, from 2300 B.C. to 1800 B.C., the people of the Indus Valley civilisation lived in their well-planned cities, raised their wheat, barley and cotton, and carried on trade with the Persian Gulf, Afghanistan and the rest of the subcontinent.

How it began, who its people were, and how it ended remain mysteries. It shows clear affinities with ancient Mesopotamia, but striking differences as well. Whether its people were the ancestors of those who today speak Munda or Dravidian languages we can only guess until their script is read.

Flood, dessication of the land, and invasion may all have played a part in bringing it to an end. Very probably the Indus Valley civilisation had been destroyed by the time the Aryans arrived. Its fate and its contribution to Hindu culture remain unknown.

The Aryans

The tribes calling themselves Aryans, who settled in the Punjab after the fall of the Indus Valley civilisation, present a very different picture. Far from emulating their city-dwelling predecessors, they were decidedly rural, living in small stockaded villages. Their chief instrument of war was the light, swift, horse-drawn chariot. Their weapons and tools were of bronze. Their chief occupations were raising cattle and raiding the herds of others. Cattle played a great part in their economy. It is not known whether they knew the techniques of agriculture before entering India, but in any case they quickly took up the cultivation of wheat and rice.

The Aryans spoke an archaic form of Sanskrit, a language belonging to the Indo-European family which includes, among others, Greek, Latin, the Slavic, Celtic and Germanic languages, and Persian. Perhaps as early as 1500 B.C. these tribes crossed the mountain passes which connect the Punjab with the Iranian plateau. Their formidable chariots scattered their aboriginal enemies, whom they called *dasas*, a name which quickly came to be a synonym for 'slave'. From the Punjab they pushed eastward to the region of Delhi and the Gangetic basin, and thence south into central India. In succeeding centuries Aryan culture established its dominance over the Deccan and the south.

The age of the Aryan republics and monarchies was India's heroic age. The aristocracy were called *Kshatriyas*; their chief was the *raja*. The *Kshatriya* boy learned bowmanship and charioteering. He

Left: cutlers and polishers of ivory. The merchants and artisans of ancient India were organised into guilds comparable to those of medieval Europe, but based on the caste system. Extract from *The Religious Ceremonies of the Indians*. (*Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.*)

Below: cattle played a key role in the economy of the Aryans. They furnished milk, curds and ghee, dung for fuel and for plastering the walls of peasant dwellings, and transport. Here a cow carries the wares of a water-vendor. Though the early Aryans had slaughtered cattle for feasts and offered them to the gods in sacrifice, in later times the cow came to be looked upon as sacred and not to be slain.

Palms had an economic role of equal importance on the southern littoral.

Right: a peasant collects coconuts. Extracts from *The Religious Ceremonies of the Indians*. (*Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.*)

was taught to keep his honour untarnished and to seek glory on the battlefield. If he were killed, paradise was to be his reward. To slay one who submitted, to refuse hospitality to a stranger, even though he were an enemy, were heinous sins. At sixteen the Kshatriya boy was a man, ready to make war for the four lawful ends: cattle, gold,

territory and women.

The Brahmins or priests presided over the great sacrifices of the more powerful Kshatriyas, offering oblations of ghee (clarified butter) to the sacred fire and muttering the hymns of the *Vedas* or sacred writings, which ensured their success.

The common folk were called *Vaishya*. To them were allotted the more mundane functions of cattle-breeding, agriculture and trade. Below them were the *Shudras*, a servile population and probably largely non-Aryan. This classification of Aryan society into four estates is quite old and precedes the evolution of the caste system, with which it should not be confused.

Vedic religion

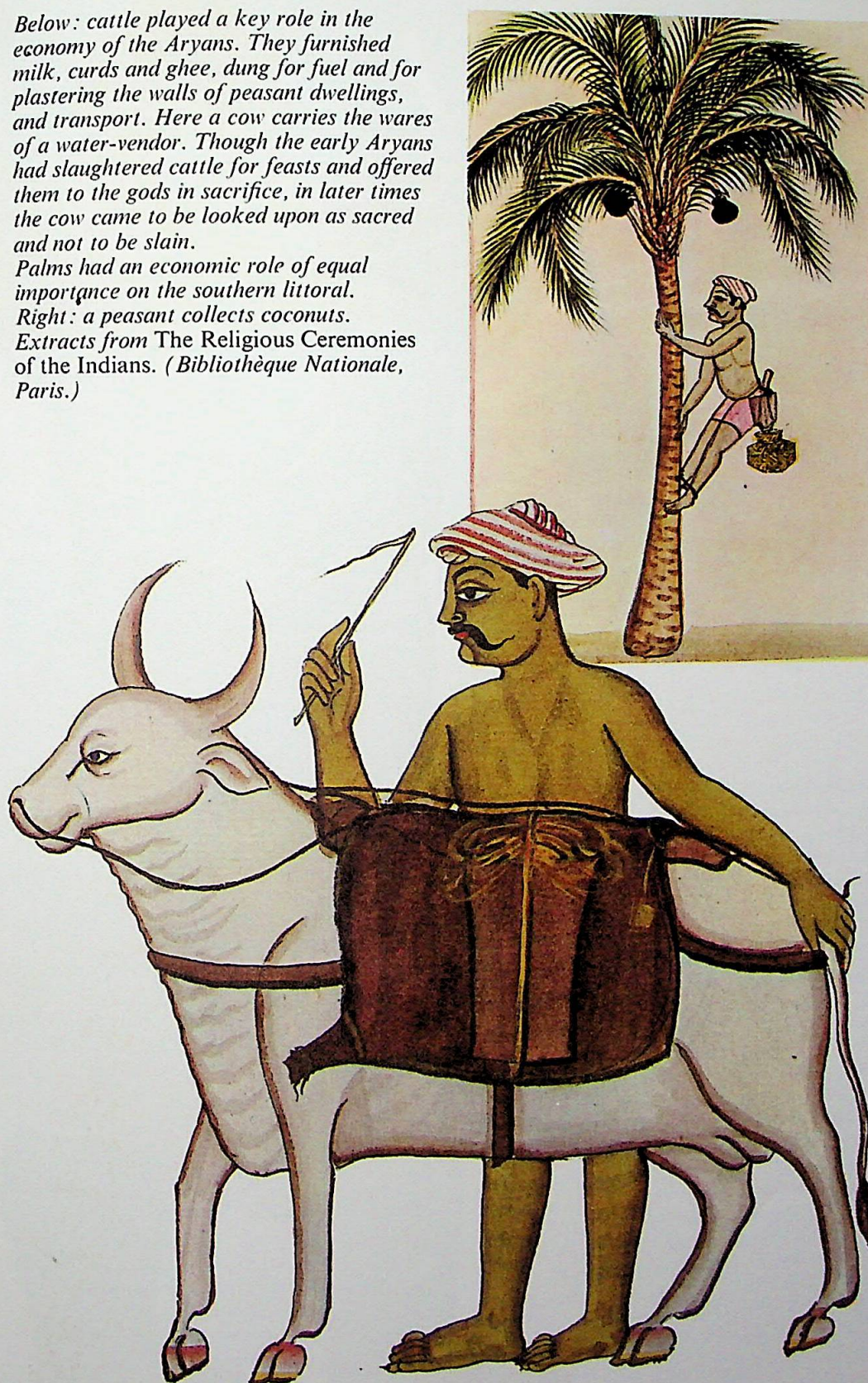
'Veda' is the name given to the religious literature of the Aryan tribes of India. More specifically the term is applied to the collections of hymns to the gods which are chanted as the sacrifice. The *Rig Veda* is the oldest of these collections, its earliest hymns belonging to the time when the Vedic tribes had just occupied the Punjab, and some may date from the period of their stay in Persia.

Indra, the war chief of the gods, is one of the major deities of the *Rig Veda*, destroying the forts of the Dasas and slaying demons. Varuna, whose Greek counterpart is Uranus, and Mitra, the Persian Mithra, guarantee oaths and mete out justice. The gods of the *Rig Veda* are largely the sky and elemental deities of the sort common to all the early Indo-European religions.

The gods were humoured and propitiated in sacrifices to the sacred fire, *Agni*, conducted in the hearth or in the open air. In its spirit as in its practices it was far removed from the worship of idols in temples of later Hinduism. A second stratum of Vedic literature, the *Brahmanas*, sets out the details of the sacrifice which grew more and more complex, and became increasingly the speciality of the class of priestly Brahmins.

A third stratum of the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads*, marks a new departure in the evolution of religious concepts. They assert the greater efficacy of meditation and renunciation over the sacrifice. The doctrine of transmigration, which holds that one is reborn after death in a higher or lower form of life according to one's deserts, was by this time accepted as self-evident. The object of meditation is knowledge of the identity of the inmost self with the absolute, knowledge which can release one from the endless cycle of rebirth and redeath, and bring union with the over-soul.

Of the Indo-European religious heritage little remains in modern India except the wedding ritual round the sacred fire and the daily domestic sacrifice. But the mystical speculations embodied in the *Upanishads*, are the spiritual forebears of Jainism, Buddhism, and the philosophical schools of Hinduism.





Jainism

At the close of the Vedic age eastern India, especially the region round Magadha in the present state of Bihar, where the dominance of Brahmins was not fully established, saw the birth of a number of ascetic movements. These rejected the authority of the *Vedas*, but their metaphysical doctrines show an affinity with those of the *Upanishads*. One of the earliest and most successful of these new religions was Jainism, which today claims some 1,500,000 adherents among the merchants and traders of western India and the south.

According to Jain doctrine the entire universe is filled with living souls, whose primeval purity is clouded by action, and which are bound thereby to material things and the endless cycle of transmigration. The remedy is an attitude of passive devotional contemplation and the observance of the doctrine of *ahimsa* or non-violence. The monks wear gauze over their mouths and

Scenes of Indian village life.

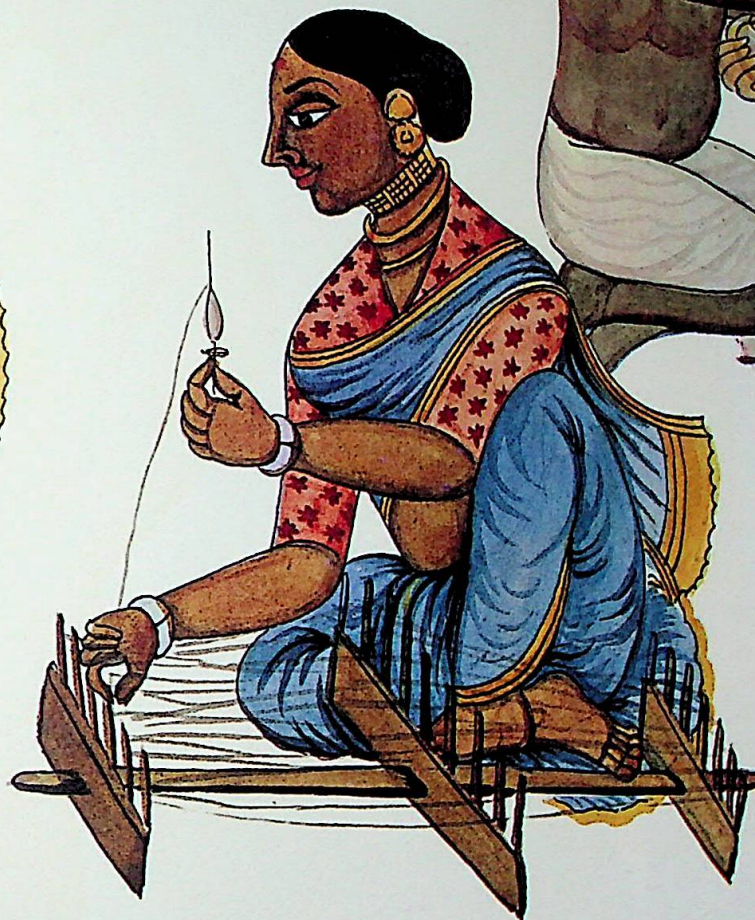
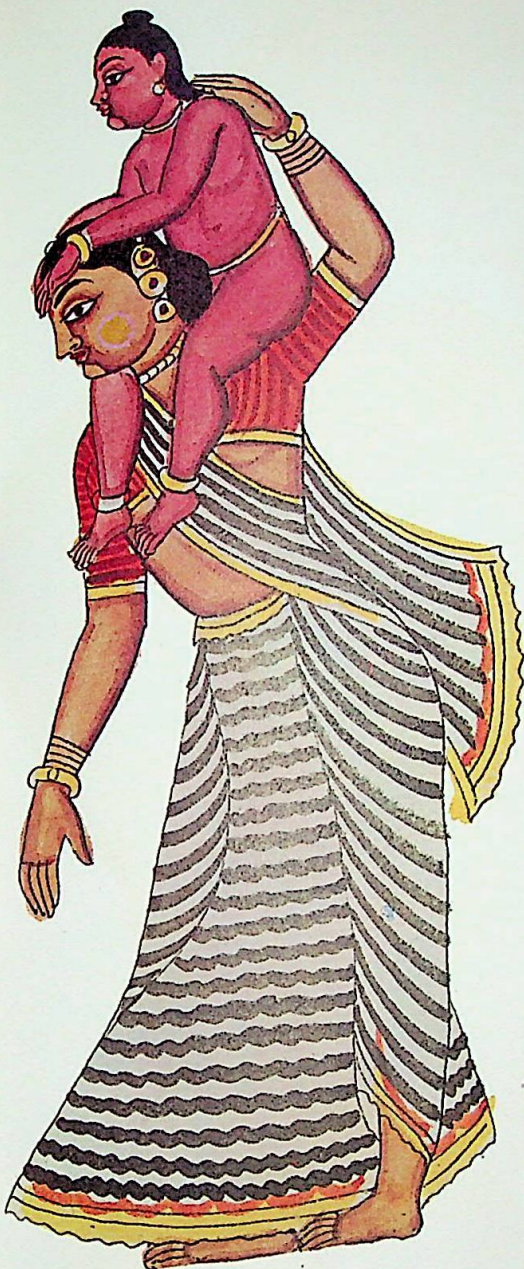
Above: a housewife churns butter.

Right: a man takes his offering of flowers to the shrine of a god.

Opposite left and centre: a woman carries a child on her shoulders, while another spins.

Far right: a barber shaves the head of a client who views the result in a mirror.

Indian manuscripts. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)



sweep the path before them as they walk to avoid inhaling or treading on insects or microbes.

Buddhism

The Mahavira ('Great Hero'), founder of Jainism, and the Buddha ('the Enlightened') both lived in the sixth century B.C. in eastern India, and both were said to be of princely birth. According to legend, at the Buddha's birth it was prophesied that he would be either a great ascetic or a universal emperor. His father, wishing him to follow in his footsteps, raised him in circumstances of ease and luxury, to prevent him from developing any unworldly tendencies.

One day, however, as the son was driving about in his chariot, he saw a birth, a sick man, an old man, and a corpse. Filled with a sense of the sorrow inherent in life, he renounced his family and patrimony, and stole away at night to discover the source of suffering. Enlightenment came while he

meditated under a tree, and the disciples he acquired through his preaching became the Buddhist monkhood. Thus began the long career of Buddhism, now extinguished in the land of its birth but with millions of adherents in all the countries of the Far East.

Buddhism propounds a middle way between the indulgence of the senses and the severe self-mortification of the ascetic. Suffering is universal. Its root is desire and its cure is the transcendence of desire through the healing knowledge obtained in meditation. By leading an exemplary and disinterested life, and by diligent meditation, release from the cycle of rebirth and redeath, the final extinction of Nirvana, can be won.

Several features of the caste system were by now in evidence. However, the many by now in evidence. However, the many of ascetic movements, and the religions of release which grew out of them, rejected in some respects the principles on which caste was based. The taking of life is evil: in holding this the Mahavira and the Buddha stood opposed to the Vedic religion of sacrifice.

What a man does is more important than what condition of life he is born into: in this they disturbed the pretensions of the Brahmin priests. Anyone could become a monk, regardless of rank. But for the vast majority caste remained the organising principle of their social existence, and whatever their higher loyalties, the Brahmin priest continued to serve their ritual needs, at birth, at marriage and at death.

Invaders from the west

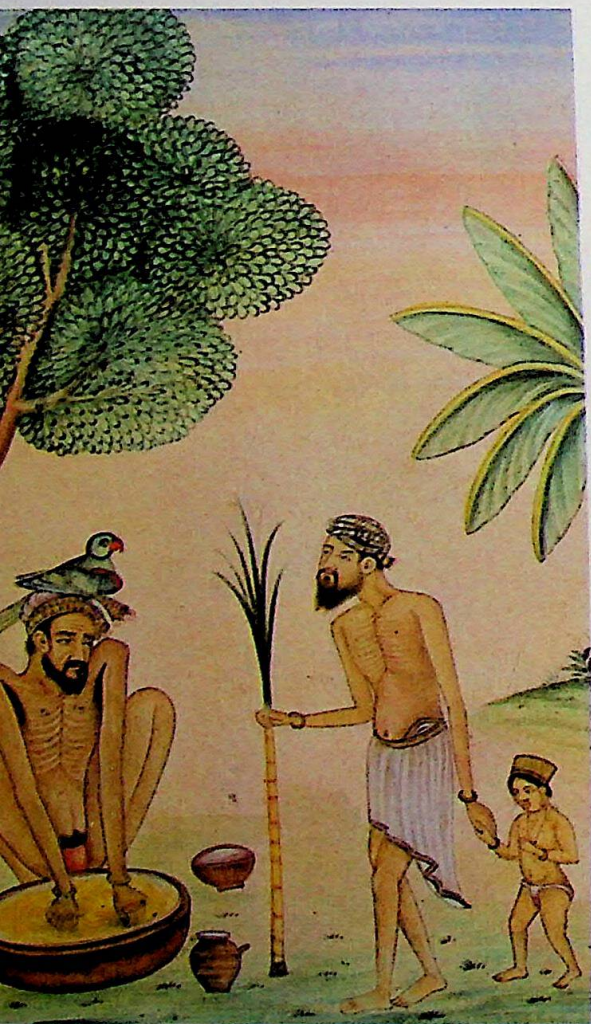
The states of the Vedic age had been tribal republics and monarchies, ruled by a hereditary aristocracy, the Kshatriyas. Such states continued to prevail in the Punjab until the coming of Alexander the Great in 326 B.C., and it was there that the prestige of the Brahmin was highest. In the eastern regions, however, at the same time as the appearance of Jainism and Buddhism, there arose territorial states whose policies were expansionist and whose rulers were often

usurpers of low birth. The most successful of these were Magadha, whose capital, Pataliputra, was soon to become the seat of government of an empire larger than any India has since seen.

The tribal states of the Punjab had known invasion before Alexander. Gandhara and Sind had been satrapies of Darius of Persia towards the close of the sixth century B.C., and Indians had served in Xerxes' host for the invasion of Greece. Alexander must have appeared to Indian eyes as the last of the Persian conquerors. He showed in the battle of the Jhelum the superiority of swift cavalry over the chariots of the Indian ruler Porus which got bogged down in mud. But Porus' elephants inflicted heavy losses on the Macedonians, and elephants soon became the most prized engines of war in the Hellenistic world. Alexander's men shortly after mutinied at the thought of endless advance through the sub-continent, and the expedition withdrew down the Indus.

Meanwhile Chandragupta Maurya had seized the throne of Magadha by virtue of a popular revolt. The tribal states of the

Below: a peasant extracts juice from sugar cane.



Punjab had already been weakened by Alexander's conquests, and the authority of Alexander's governors, was undermined by his death. In the consequent turmoil and uncertainty the tribal states quickly fell to Chandragupta's advance, and the last memory of Alexander's brief stay in India was soon extinguished.

Seleucus, the Macedonian general who succeeded to Alexander's eastern dominions, concluded a pact with Chandragupta, by which he obtained 500 of the elephants he so badly needed for his war against another Macedonian general, Antigonus. In exchange he ceded vast tracts west of the Indus in what is now Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Seleucus sent Megasthenes as ambassador to the Mauryan court at Pataliputra. He wrote a most valuable, though somewhat idealised, account of India in the early years of the Mauryan Empire. To Megasthenes India was a land where crime was rare, though there were no written laws, where slavery did not exist and where the peasant ploughed his land unmolested by armies

engaged in battle nearby. His book was the basis of knowledge of India in the west for many centuries.

The pillared hall of Chandragupta's palace recalls that of Darius and his successors at Persepolis. The polished sandstone pillars with animal capitals of Asoka Maurya show definite Persian influence and were possibly designed by Persian workmen. But, however indebted to foreign sources, the imperial style of the Mauryas is purely Indian in spirit.

Asoka the pacific emperor

When Asoka acceded to the Mauryan throne in 268 B.C. the empire he inherited comprised all but the extreme southern tip of the Indian diamond and some of the eastern seaboard. He completed it by the conquest of Kalinga (Orissa) on the eastern coast below the mouths of the Ganges.

Asoka had an inclination towards Buddhism, and the deaths and suffering caused by the Kalinga campaign transformed his life. Henceforth he renounced aggressive war and made his whole aim the welfare of his subjects 'in this world and the next'. His officials were to inculcate the virtues of respect for elders and the teachers of all sects, of non-violence and, of peaceableness. He sent envoys to the Hellenistic kingdom to promote his views there. Such 'conquest by righteousness' he held superior to conquest by arms.

He himself undertook tours to further this teaching and to visit the holy places of Buddhism. Above all, he had his words inscribed on rocks and pillars throughout the land. Though mostly in the dialect of Magadha, Asokan edicts in Greek and Aramaic have been found in Kandahar. By virtue of these inscriptions we possess a record of the simple, direct and earnest words of one of the great figures of world history.

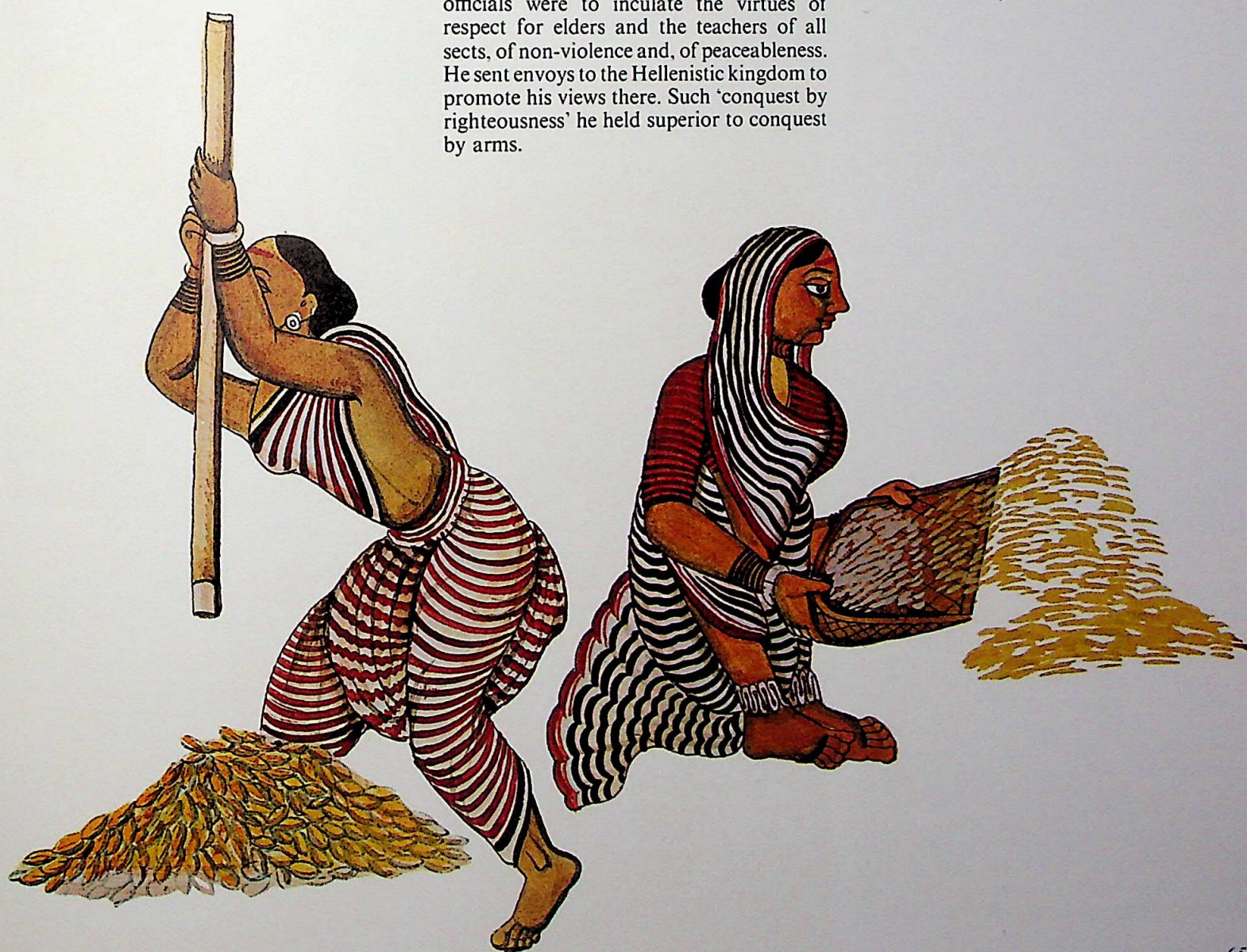
During Asoka's reign Buddhism prospered and spread. It was at this time that Buddhism was brought to Ceylon where it has flourished ever since.

The Indian countryside.

Far left: a bird-catcher and his dog journey across the plain. Indian Miniatures. (Musée Guimet, Paris.)

Wheat is the staple of the northwest, and rice of the Gangetic plain, the Deccan and the south: both were known to the Aryan tribes of the Vedas.

Below left: Tamil women thresh and winnow rice. Indian manuscript. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)



The Shunga and Kushan empires

In 250 B.C. Diodotus broke away from the Seleucid Empire and established an independent Greek kingdom in Bactria. But in the century which followed the pressure of central Asian tribes, the Scythians or Sakas, drove the rulers of Bactria inexorably south and east, into Gandhara and the Punjab.

The Mauryan Empire did not long survive the death of Asoka, and in 187 B.C. Pushyamitra raised on its ruins the more modest Shunga Empire, which was Hindu in its religion and revivalist in spirit. The two Indo-Greek kingdoms into which the Bactrian kingdom had divided were able neither to destroy the Shungas to the east nor to make common cause against the Saka menace which had appeared in the northwest and perished utterly before the beginning of the Christian era.

Menander (Milinda) was one of the few Greeks to leave a lasting impression on the Indian consciousness, thanks less to his considerable conquests than to his patronage of Buddhism. He figures in a dialogue with a Buddhist monk in *The Questions of Milinda*, a piece of early Buddhist literature, and his legend has spread all over Buddhist Asia. The Greeks minted portrait coins of superb artistry which set a pattern emulated by succeeding kings of India. One of the last benefits of their presence in the northwest was the development of the Gandhara school of sculpture, with its image of the Buddha rather startlingly given a Greek profile, his hair and drapery sculpted in the Greek manner.

The Sakas did not knock on the gates of India in vain. It is difficult to make out the history of these invasions from the scrappy and contradictory bits of evidence that survive in half a dozen languages, or even to discover the identity of the numerous people involved. But in any case we can say that western India and the northwest were in the hands of barbarian kings by the first century A.D. The tradition according to which St Thomas the Apostle visited Gondopharnes, king of India, shortly after the Crucifixion, may well be true.

Some time in the first or second century A.D. Kanishka, king of a people called the Kushans, established an empire which straddled the mountain passes of the northwest and extended well into the heart of north India. The Kushan dress as depicted on sculpted reliefs—pointed felt cap, long riding coat trimmed with fur, baggy trousers and felt boots—suffices to show their central Asian origin. Their special mode of warfare, the swift cavalry which ended the use of the chariot in Persia, and perhaps also in India, at least in their domains.

The Kushan kings took their titles from the peoples they had conquered or with whom they were in contact: Maharaja (Indian), king of kings (Persian), son of

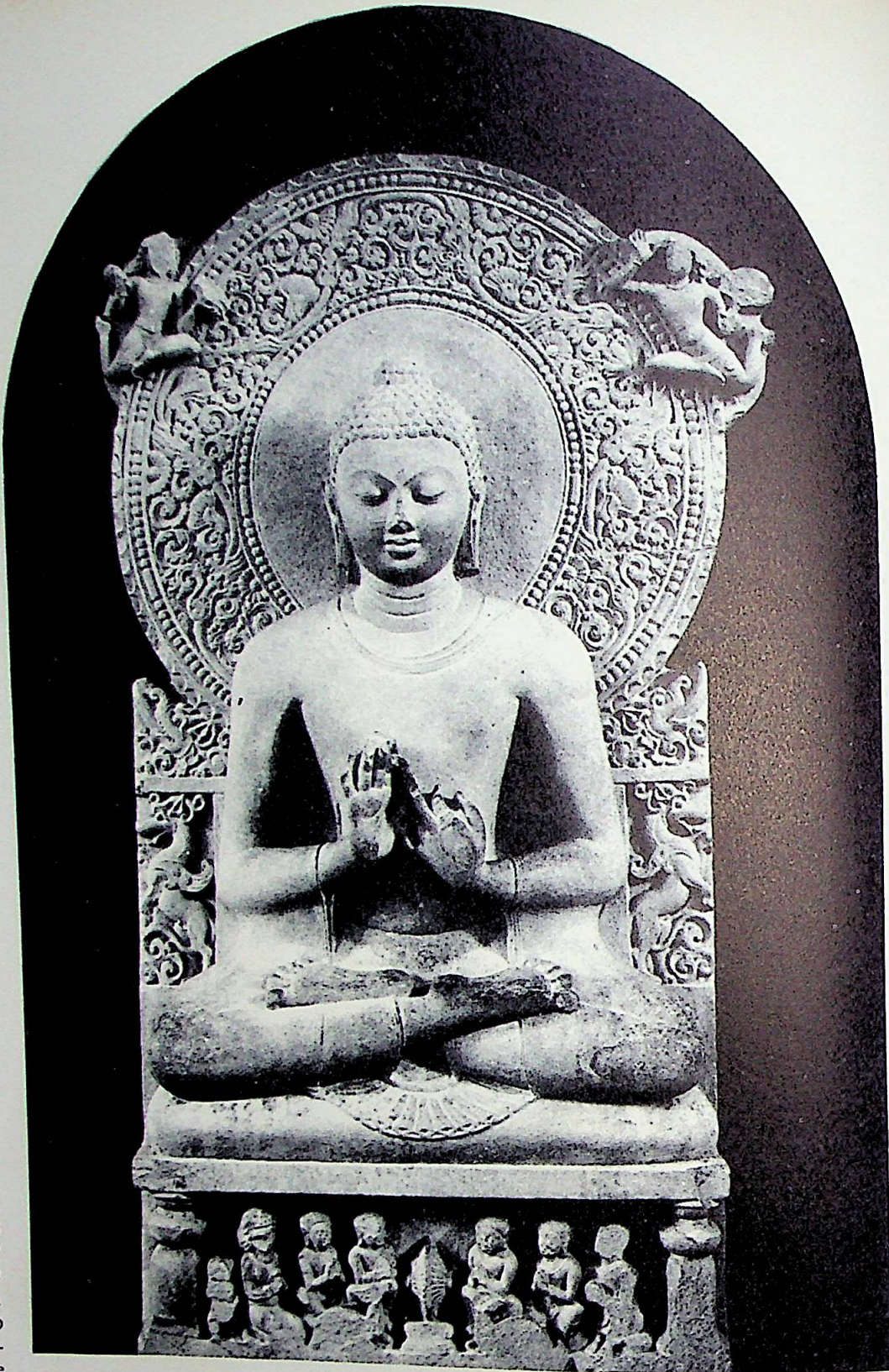
heaven (Chinese), Caesar (Roman). They were similarly eclectic in religious matters, and, thanks to their patronage and protection, Buddhism found a foothold in central Asia and thence spread to China.

The age of invasion saw the gradual emergence of two great religious movements. The Mahayana ('Great Vehicle') form of Buddhism, with its worship of the Buddha of the past and its emphasis on the ability of laymen to achieve the highest goal, had a wider appeal than the more austere and monkish religion of the old schools, called Hinayana ('Little Vehicle'). In the course of time Mahayana Buddhism prevailed in Tibet, China, Japan and several of the countries of southeast Asia. The Hinayana remained strongest in Ceylon and Burma.

The second religious development was the Bhakti cult, a popular movement, setting the loving adoration of the god and dependence on his grace against the sacrifice of the *Vedas* or the gnosis of the *Upanishads*, Jainism and Buddhism. The worship of Vishnu incarnate as Krishna is the theme of the *Bhagavad Gita*, easily the most widely read of the religious classics of India.

India under the Guptas

In A.D. 320 the barbarian kingdoms of the northwest and west had been either reduced or Indianised, and the Magadhan Empire was revived by Chandra Gupta I. Under his son, Samudra Gupta, most of northern India was included within the Gupta



domains, and the Deccan and the south experienced Gupta power. His son, Chandra Gupta II, ousted the descendants of the Saka invaders from western India.

The reign of Chandra Gupta II was perhaps the most brilliant ancient India was to see. From the account left by a Chinese monk, Fa-hsien, who visited India at this time, it appears that northern India enjoyed more peace and security and a milder government than it had done for many centuries. Sanskrit poetry and drama flourished under the example of the great dramatist and poet Kalidasa, and Sanskrit was widely employed at court, in administration and in inscriptions.

From Gupta times date the first extant remains of Hindu temples. Gupta architecture set a standard of beauty, simplicity and restraint which later architecture did not achieve. Although adherents of the Hindu sects, the Gupta emperors patronised Buddhism as well, and the Buddhist university at Nalanda attracted monks from Ceylon and China.

The earliest literature of south India, the Tamil anthologies of poems on war and love, mention resident Greek merchants in a south Indian port. These were no doubt the representatives of the Roman trade which, from Augustus' time, had brought prosperity to western and southern India. This literature already shows the influence of Aryan culture, though on the whole its form and spirit is indigenous.

By Gupta times, however, the south had become a transmitter as well as a receiver of Aryan culture. For it was from south India, probably the ports of the Pallava kingdom of Kanchi, that Sanskrit, the art of writing, Hinduism and Buddhism first reached the courts of southeast Asia. South India had remained largely free of north Indian control, taking to sea earlier and with more enthusiasm than the peoples of other parts of India and perpetually interfering in the affairs of Ceylon. Though the Pallavas had had to bow to the forces of Samudra Gupta during his southern campaign, their submission was not lasting.

From the middle of the fifth century a new barbarian invader, the Hun, made his ominous appearance, as his kindred were doing in Europe. For a generation or so the Guptas succeeded in holding off this menace from the northwest. But toward the close of the century it reappeared in the persons of Toramana and Mihirakula, the latter holding Kashmir, western India and part of the Gangetic basin. In fifty years the Huns were pushed back to Kashmir and parts of the northwest, and they never again became a threat, losing their identity among the Rajput clans of later fame. But the Gupta Empire had perished in the ordeal.

Harsha, under whom north India of the early seventh century was again united from sea to sea, is the ancient Indian king best known to historians. This is both because

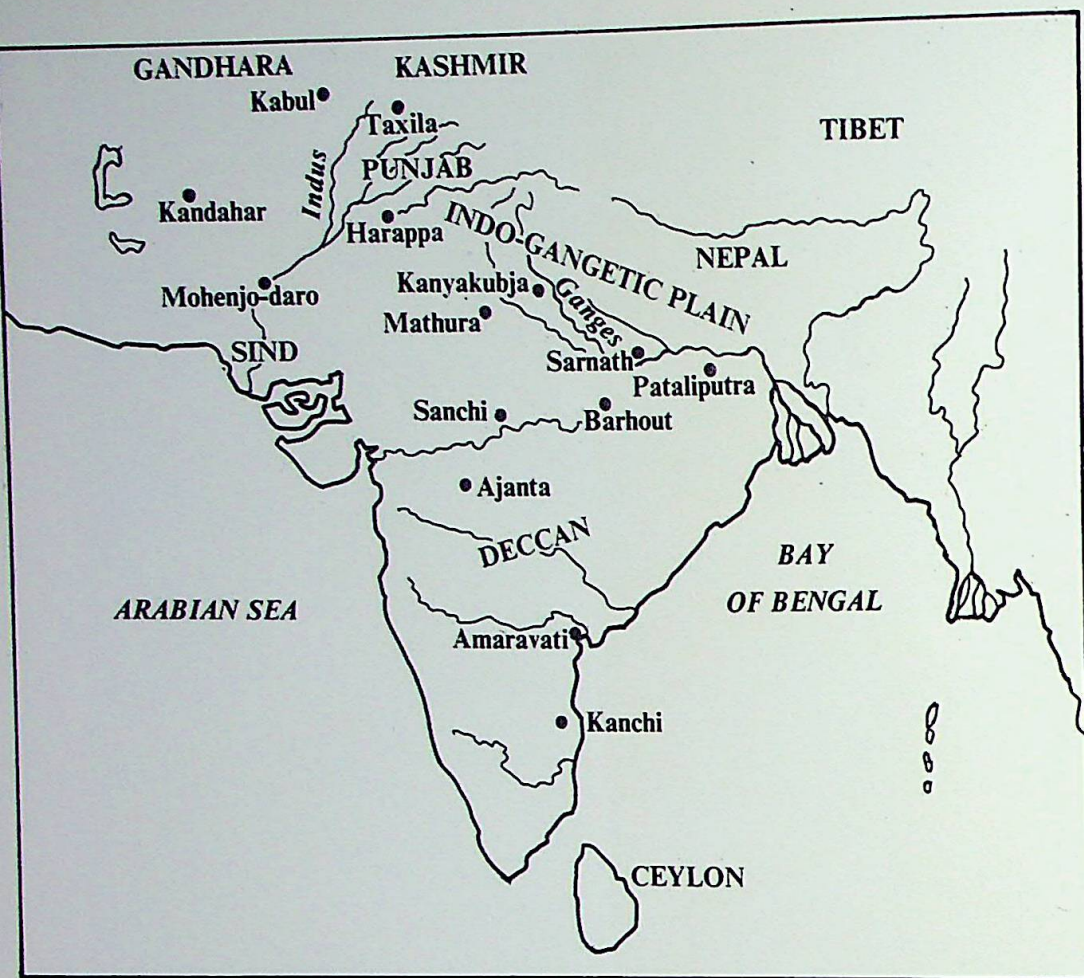


of the excellent biography by his court poet Bana and the memoirs of Hsuan Tsang, a Chinese Buddhist monk travelling in India, who enjoyed the king's hospitality. We see Harsha as a just and efficient monarch, constantly touring his empire to hear petitions and redress grievances, holding the whole together by his energy and close personal attention to affairs of state.

His power was evenly balanced with that of the Chalukyas of the Deccan, against whose king, Pulakushin II, he could make

Far left: a sculpture from Gupta times showing the Buddha delivering his first sermon. He rejected the extremes of sensuality and asceticism in the quest for the beatitude of final extinction of desire. (Sarnath Museum, Benares.)

Above: in this seventeenth-century painting from western India an ascetic is depicted with leaping deer, and attended by his pupil.



no headway. The vast, loosely knit empire he had made unravelled at his death. The succeeding centuries saw his capital, Kanyakubja, the prize in the interminable struggles between the Palas of Bengal, the Gurjara-Pratiharas of north India and the Rashtrakutas in the Deccan.

The decline of ancient India

Toward the close of the tenth century a Tamil power, the Cola, was laying the foundations of an empire which was to include the south and Ceylon, and whose arms were borne as far afield as the Ganges in the north and the island of Sumatra to the east. The Rashtrakutas had given way to the revived Chalukya line, the Palas were in decay and the Gurjara-Pratihara Empire was fragmenting, its feudatories growing strong at the expense of their suzerain. It had been a long time since a central Asian invader had appeared in the northwest. It was almost time for another.

The conferment of royal lands, powers and prerogatives on conquered kings, on powerful subordinates, and on great temples and monasteries had been going on for a long time. The effects of this were to fritter away the strength of the nominal overlord.

Coins grew scarce, and India's trade with foreign lands does not seem to have been as flourishing as under the Kushans and Guptas. Even in Harsha's time security of life and property had declined. Hsuan Tsang

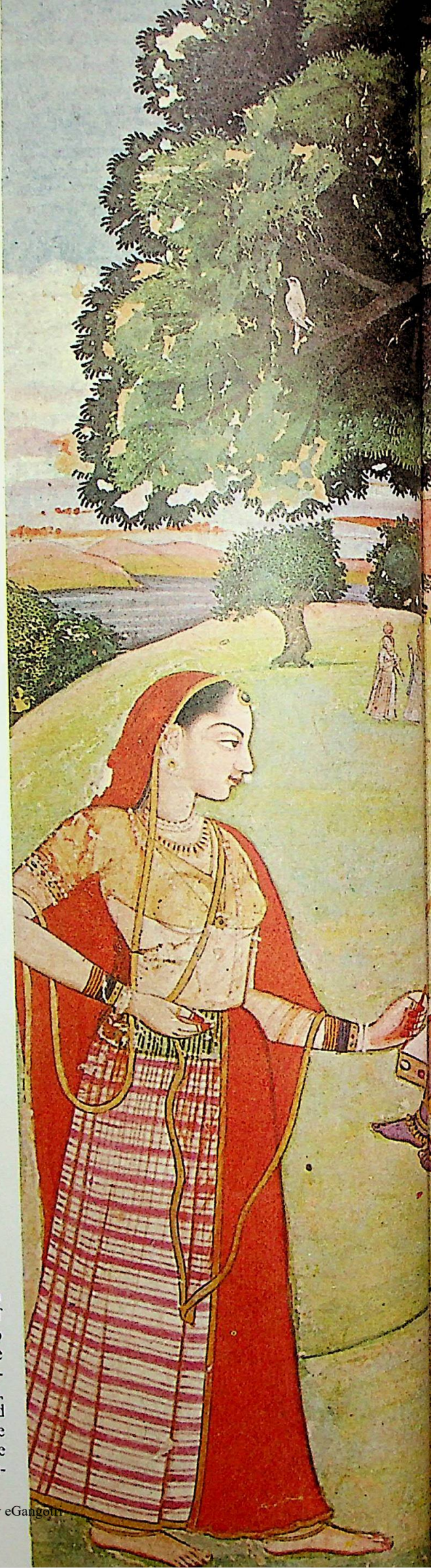
A map of ancient India showing Mohenjo-daro and Harappa, the two chief cities of the Indus Valley civilisation, which flourished during the third and second millennia B.C. Invaders of India, from the Aryans in 1500 B.C. to the Muslims 2,500 years later, made their entry into the sub-continent through the mountain passes of the northwest.

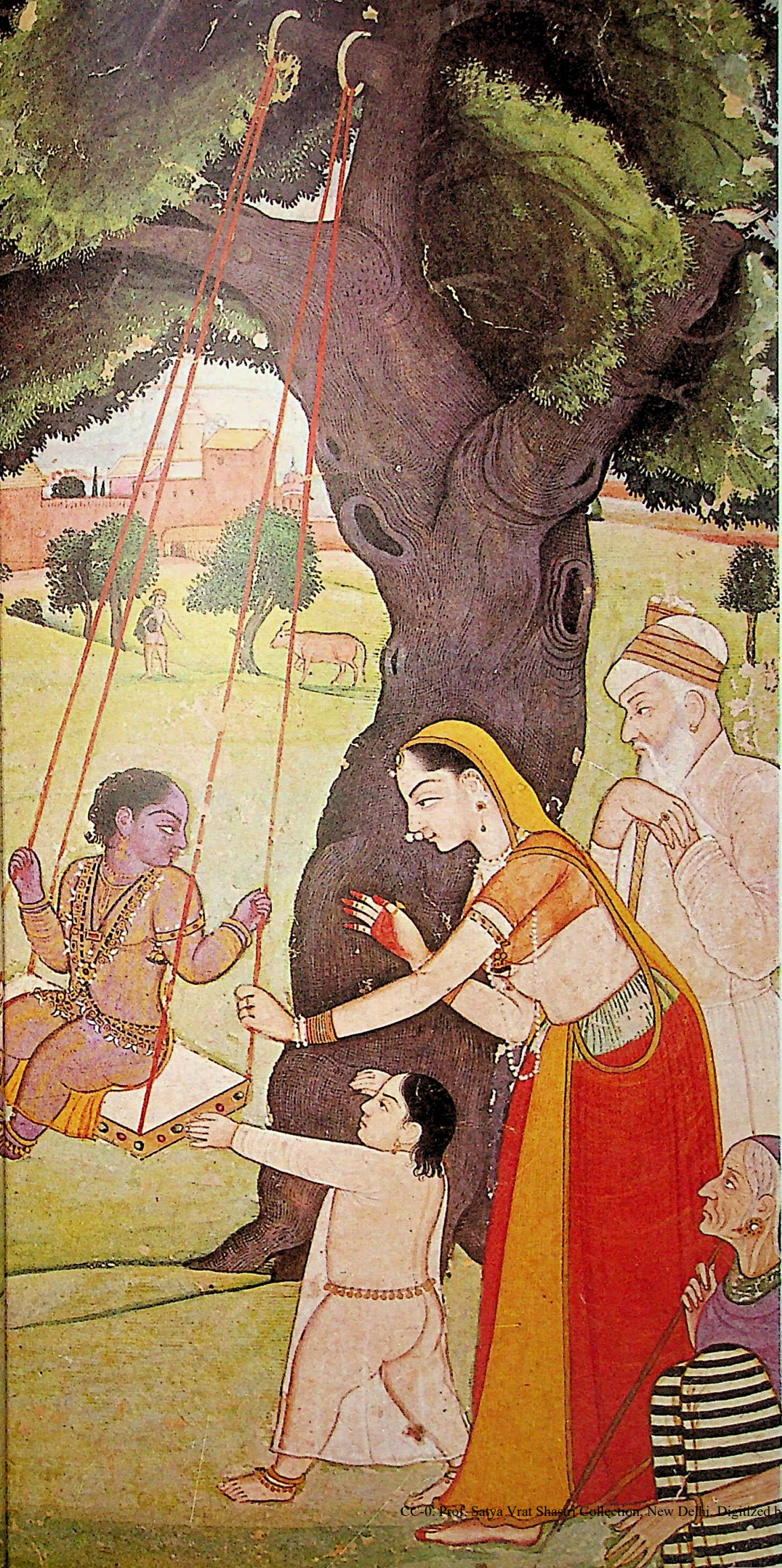
was several times set upon by bandits and very nearly lost his life.

North India's outward life was marked by provincialism, insecurity and endless dynastic warfare. The inward conviction that this was an age of decline found expression in the popular religious literature of the time. Those for whom the burden of tradition was too wearisome sought out the increasingly successful and esoteric Tantra cults.

The coming of Islam

India did not succumb to the Muslim invaders all at once, nor did community of religion mean that the various invaders who appeared were of one nation and of one mind. The Gurjara-Pratihara kings successfully contained the Arab kingdom of Sind, founded in 712, and the raids of Mahmud of Ghazni, carried out at the expense of the kings of northern India, resulted only in the annexation of the Punjab and the north-





Krishna playing on a swing. Krishna ('The Dark One') is an avatar of the god, that is, one of the human forms assumed by Vishnu in order to save the world in times of great danger. As a little child he is known for his pranks, as a youth, he is the lover, and as a man, the hero. Eighteenth-century painting. (British Museum, London.)

west. It was not until the beginning of the thirteenth century that a dynasty of Ghurid Turks captured the frail kingdoms of northern India and established the first sultans of Delhi.

India once again had to face a murderous central Asian cavalry; but now for the first time that it was confronted with rulers who would not be Hinduised. The old Indo-European-speaking peoples had been tolerant of the gods of other peoples and places: Rome had offered the gods of its enemies more sumptuous temples and more devoted attendants, if they would favour the Roman soldiers in battle. The tolerance of Asoka for all religious sects matched the tolerance Cyrus the Great had shown to the Jews, and the homage he paid to the gods of Babylonia and Egypt.

In the ancient Middle East it was otherwise: the gods of enemies defeated in battle were enslaved or destroyed. The iconoclasm of their Middle Eastern religion suited only too well the native temper of the Turkish dynasties of central Asia.

But, in spite of the pillage and destruction which the early representatives of Islam in India carried out, and the oppressive rule of the later Muslims, ancient India did not entirely die. The same Indian classes which staffed the bureaucracy, from village headman to the secretariat, before the Muslims appeared often continued to do so while kings rose and fell. Indian life, especially in the Deccan and the south, was not on the whole radically disturbed.

The decisive difference was the permanent presence of Islam itself, and of Islamic, and in particular, Persian, culture. In the past only the missionary zeal of Asoka and the Buddhist monks, and the allure of the Roman and Far Eastern trade had aroused Indians to an interest in foreign parts. Now India had perforce broken its shell of isolation. Under the Moguls music, painting and religious poetry flourished as never before. A new Indian culture was being born.

The Delhi sultanate

The Muslim conquest of India was undertaken by Turks who had initially settled in the area now known as Turkestan, bordering on Persia, from which they absorbed both Iranian and Islamic cultural influences. In the eleventh century they expanded westwards, defeated the Byzantine emperor Romanus at the battle of Manzikert (1071),

and captured Jerusalem five years later. There was at the same time an increase in Turkish pressure on India, which continued during the next 100 years, reaching a climax at the end of the twelfth century with the campaigns of Muhammad Ghuri.

This brilliant Turkish leader moved into northern India from his base in Ghazni. At the first battle of Tarain in 1191 he was successfully opposed by a coalition of Rajput chiefs under Prithvi Raj, but he returned to the same battlefield in the following year with a mixed force of 120,000 Afghans, Turks and Persians. On this occasion the Rajput chiefs were overcome by the mobile armoured cavalry of the Turks. Prithvi Raj fled but was later killed. Delhi was captured and the surrounding territories of northern India were absorbed by the Muslim invaders. During the next three centuries northern India was under Turkish rule.

The Slave dynasty

The first Muslim dynasty established at Delhi was under Qutb-ud-din Aibak, a slave of Muhammad Ghuri. The use of slaves in high positions was a common practice in the early Turkish dynasties. Many of these slaves were the educated sons of captured chiefs who achieved distinction through ability and loyal service. In the first century of Turkish rule in India each of the rulers at Delhi was either a slave or the descendant of a slave, thus giving the dynasty its name.

It was mainly through Aibak's efforts that Benares, Gwalior, Gujarat and Kalinjar were occupied and Muslim control extended over northern India. As a reward for his services, in 1206 he was given the viceroyalty at Delhi, where his administration was harsh but just to Hindus and Muslims alike. He died in 1210 after falling from a horse while playing polo, and the throne passed to a slave of Aibak's named Iltutmish.

Iltutmish (1211-36) may be regarded as the real founder of the Slave dynasty, which ruled at Delhi throughout the thirteenth century. He consolidated the Turkish hold over northern India and established the military system of government which maintained the position of the Muslim minority. He also continued the rebuilding of the old city of Delhi, begun by Aibak.

At the same time Persian cultural influences were encouraged. Persian men of letters, who fled to Delhi after the rise of the Mongols under Genghis Khan, were employed as scribes and officials. Although Hindi was tolerated, the delicate Sanskrit language was used in administration, and alongside it there developed a new language which reflected the cross-fertilisation of cultural ideas during the Muslim period in India. This was Urdu, the 'language of the camp', a mixture of Sanskrit, Arabic and Turki, used only by the common people at first, but accepted as a medium of literary

expression by the seventeenth century.

After Iltutmish's death in 1236 the dissolute behaviour of his son seriously undermined the stability of the sultanate at Delhi. His daughter Raziyya, whom Iltutmish had wished to succeed, attempted to take over the government, but the proud Turkish nobles could not tolerate the rule of a woman and rebellion broke out. The dynasty was saved by the rise of another slave, Balban.

Ghiyas-ud-din Balban was undoubtedly the most capable of the slave kings who ruled at Delhi in the thirteenth century. In his youth he had persuaded Iltutmish to purchase him, and he had served Iltutmish successfully as water-carrier, chief huntsman, commander of the cavalry and lord chamberlain. He then continued as chief minister to the sultan Nasir-ad-din and succeeded to the throne himself on the sultan's death in 1266.

During his rule Balban ruthlessly subdued internal unrest and strengthened the northern frontiers against the Mongols. He also reorganised the administration and enhanced the royal status by introducing Persian concepts of kingship and by insisting on the strict observance of an elaborate court etiquette. He believed that the royal dignity should be based on respect, and he always appeared correctly dressed before his courtiers, who were not permitted to appear lighthearted in his presence.

The Mongol threat

To the medieval observer, the expansion of the Mongols in the thirteenth century seemed to be checked at the borders of civilisation only by the decline of its own momentum. In record time the implacable nomadic horsemen of Genghis Khan and his successors, who had ridden out of central Asia, swept everything before them and created an empire which stretched across Europe and Asia from Germany in the west to Japan in the east. In China the disciplined hordes of Kublai Khan brought an end to the Sung dynasty and established Mongol rule.

In the northeast the Khanate of the Golden Horde imposed itself on the emerging Russian state and menaced the position of the Slavs. In the Middle East the empire of Hulagu Khan transformed the Muslim world. Mongol pressure in this area steadily increased from the time of Genghis Khan's invasion of Transoxiana in 1219 to Hulagu Khan's sack of Baghdad in 1258, which brought the Abbasid caliphate to an end.

Signs of this Mongol eruption appeared in India when Jalal-ad-din, the courageous shah of Khwarizin was driven into the Sind by Genghis Khan in 1221. Thereafter, for several decades the Mongols pressed heavily southwards, attracted by the wealth of the Indian states. Lahore was destroyed in 1241 and the Sind and the Punjab were repeatedly

harried.

For the greater part of the thirteenth century the defence of India's northern borders preoccupied successive sultans who ruled at Delhi. By successfully opposing the spread of the Mongols the Delhi sultans performed a signal service to India, which more than justified the harsh nature of Turkish military control.

The Khaljis

The death of Balban in 1287 brought an end to the Slave dynasty which had ruled at Delhi throughout the thirteenth century. The weakness of Kaigubad, who succeeded him, opened the way for the Khaljis, a clan of Afghan origin. They established a dynasty which ruled at Delhi for thirty years.

The first of the Khalji sultans, the aged and peace-loving Jalal-ud-din Firoz Shah, was soon replaced by his nephew, Ala-ad-din. Ala-ad-din, the most capable of the Khalji rulers, proved a worthy successor to Balban. He was extremely ambitious, although somewhat unrealistic in his aims and visionary in outlook. He had wild dreams of emulating Alexander the Great's achievement and of conquering the world, and even had coins struck which depicted him as Alexander the Second.

These dreams came to nothing, but during his twenty-year reign Ala-ad-din did achieve two things. He successfully opposed a Mongol threat across the northern borders during 1295-1306, when Mongol armies repeatedly penetrated into northern India, devastating the countryside around Delhi. Ala-ad-din, who showed himself a brilliant soldier, slowly forced them back and even took the offensive in Mongol territory. Secondly, he extended his rule into central India and then set out to conquer the south, an area which had remained largely independent of Turkish rule during the period of the Slave dynasty.

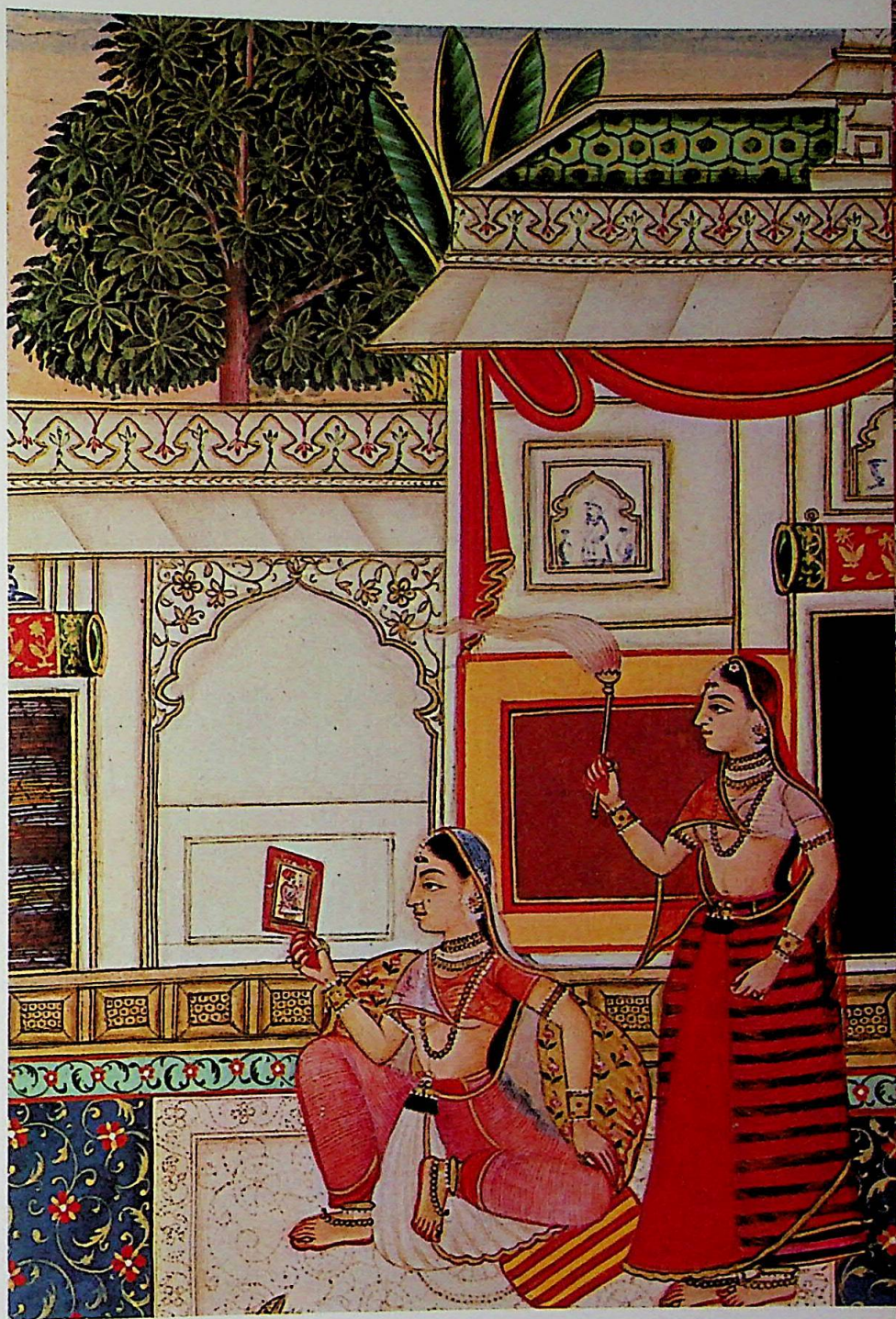
The move into south India was largely the work of Malik Kafur, a Hindu convert who had become Ala-ad-din's chief general. In a series of brilliant military moves Kafur advanced into the Deccan, occupied Devagiri, sacked the fort of Warangal and plundered innumerable Hindu temples. He returned to Delhi with hundreds of elephants, thousands of horses and countless chests of gold and precious stones, amongst which was reputedly the famous Koh-i-noor diamond.

Hindus and Muslims

The Muslim conquest of northern India had a profound effect on Hindu society. The Ilbari Turks who established the first dynasty carefully maintained themselves as a distinct group. They acted as conquerors, ruled by the sword, and made little effort to convert their Indian subjects to Islam. The Muslim nobles kept themselves aloof and



*Above: a young woman combing her hair.
Above right: lady and servant. Indian
miniatures. (Musée Guimet, Paris.)*



looked outward across the northern borders for their marriage connections and their administrative officials.

Numerous accounts can be found in the early chronicles of the harsh treatment which was meted out to the Hindus, who were frequently persecuted because of their religious beliefs. Slavery was common and even high-born Hindu women were forced to become dancing girls. Slaves were often given as gifts. This was a favourite practice of Muhammad Tughluq, who bestowed them freely on relations and friends. On one occasion he sent as a present to the Chinese emperor '100 male slaves and 100 slave songstresses and dancers from among the Indian infidels'.

In time a considerable number of Hindus were converted to the Muslim religion. The followers of Islam formed a brotherhood in which everyone was equal in the sight of God. This concept of equality appealed to large numbers of the poorer classes of the people, who were traditionally kept down by the rigid Indian caste system.

The work of conversion was largely carried out by the *Sufis*, mystics who migrated to India from Persia and moved into

the rural areas where they attracted followers by their example. Consequently, although during the early sultanate the Muslim minority maintained its position by the sword, the work of conversion was carried out peacefully and was generally more successful in those areas where Turkish military control was less obvious.

These Indian converts to Islam were known as *Hindustanis*. At first restrictions were placed on them as on the Hindus and they were discouraged from raising themselves socially or from gaining political eminence. However, with the decline of the *Ilbari* dynasty after the death of Balban, a more tolerant attitude emerged. Some of the *Hindustanis* achieved high positions, notably Malik Kafur, the favourite of Ala-ad-din Khalji.

In time Muslim society was influenced by Hindu customs. The sultans and the nobles adopted ornate Indian costumes and wore rings and jewelled necklaces, which were forbidden to the faithful by Islamic law. Richly spiced Indian food was sought after by the Muslim nobility and the Indian custom of chewing the betel-leaf became very popular.

Nevertheless, although there was some merging of social customs during the three centuries of Muslim domination, Hinduism and Islam remained clearly distinct. The irreconcilable antagonism of the two religious groups which emerged during the early sultanate was to remain an aspect of Indian history during the next six centuries.

Beyond the immediate area of Muslim control life for the Hindu peasant went on

much as it had done before the Turkish conquest. In the rural areas Hindu land-owners retained much of their power, and Hindu merchants were largely in control of trade and commerce. Agricultural products, textiles, herbs and scents were sent to nearby countries and to southeast Asia. The textile industry, in particular, developed during the Muslim period. Different and improved varieties of cloth were introduced by the Muslims from Persia and Arabia and large factories, some of which employed several thousand weavers, were set up.

Literature and the arts

One of the more pleasant aspects of Muslim rule in India was the cultural development which took place during this period. Throughout the thirteenth century, and particularly after the sack of Baghdad in 1258, there was a steady influx of artists and learned men who fled to India to escape from the Mongols. At Delhi the various sultans patronised the arts and encouraged the emergence of schools where religious studies, literature and scientific subjects were taught. Although Ala-ad-din Khalji was almost illiterate, he supported literary activity as much as any of the other sultans, and during his reign Delhi became the centre of the Muslim cultural world.

The foremost literary figure in this period was the writer and poet Amir Khusrau (1253–1325). He enjoyed the patronage of seven successive sultans and produced his greatest work during Ala-ad-din's reign. Khusrau, who is regarded as the greatest Persian poet of India, represented the new cultural outlook which began to emerge after it became clear that the Muslim conquerors were to stay in India permanently. He was the son of an immigrant Turk and an Indian Muslim woman of Turkish origin. He wrote in Persian, knew Arabic, studied Sufi philosophy and was one of the first to use Hindi as a literary medium.

The fusion of Indo-Muslim artistic trends can most readily be seen in the architectural forms which appeared during the sultanate. The Turkish rulers of the early dynasty zealously destroyed many of the Hindu temples and used the material to build mosques. Islamic craftsmen from Persia as well as Hindu builders were used in this work. As a result the two architectural traditions merged to form a new Indo-Islamic style, which is represented in many of the mosques and other buildings in and around Delhi.

The Tughluqs

The third of the Turkish dynasties in India was formed by Ghiyas-ud-din Tughluq, the son of a slave of Balban who, as warden of the frontier marshes, seized power after the death of Ala-ad-din. The Tughluqs ruled from 1320 to 1398, and their most out-



standing figure was Muhammad bin Tughluq (1325–51). He was a man of brilliant ideas, a keen student of Persian poetry and a philosopher trained in Greek metaphysics. He worked hard to carry out administrative and economic reforms. His reign was, however, a tragic one. Many of the measures which he tried to introduce were too advanced for his age. Consequently his good intentions were misunderstood and the people resented his rule.

One of the schemes which he put forward was a reform of the currency. He tried to introduce a standard copper unit of money which would replace the silver *tanka*. In a short while Hindus all over the country had begun to mint money in their own homes and, with the economy about to collapse, Muhammad had to call in all his copper tokens. These were piled in mountainous heaps outside the royal treasury, where they remained for over a century.

However, it was in his expansionist plans that Muhammad Tughluq's visionary aims and practical failings can be most clearly seen. The shift of Muslim power southwards which had been begun by Ala-ad-din Khalji was continued by Tughluq.

In an attempt to place himself in a central position in order to draw on the sources of revenue from the Deccan, he conceived the plan of transferring the capital 700 miles southwards to Deogir, which was re-named Daulatabad. The whole of the population of Delhi was forcibly shifted, and in the resulting chaos thousands of displaced people died. Muhammad realised his mistake and the people were ordered back, but this did little for his reputation.

Muhammad Tughluq had even more gaudiose plans for subjugating the territories beyond India. He dreamt of conquering Persia and even of invading China. To this end, he gathered at his court any foreigners who could give him information about these

The triumphant consolidation of Muslim conquest in northern India from the tenth to the thirteenth centuries ended in the creation of the Sultanate of Delhi.

Henceforth, traditional Hindu religion and society were confronted by the closed world of Islam. However, there was some interchange between the two cultures and the Muslim contribution was essentially Iranian because of the superior tradition of the Persians.

Above: preparations for a banquet for a sultan of Delhi. Persian miniature.

(Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)

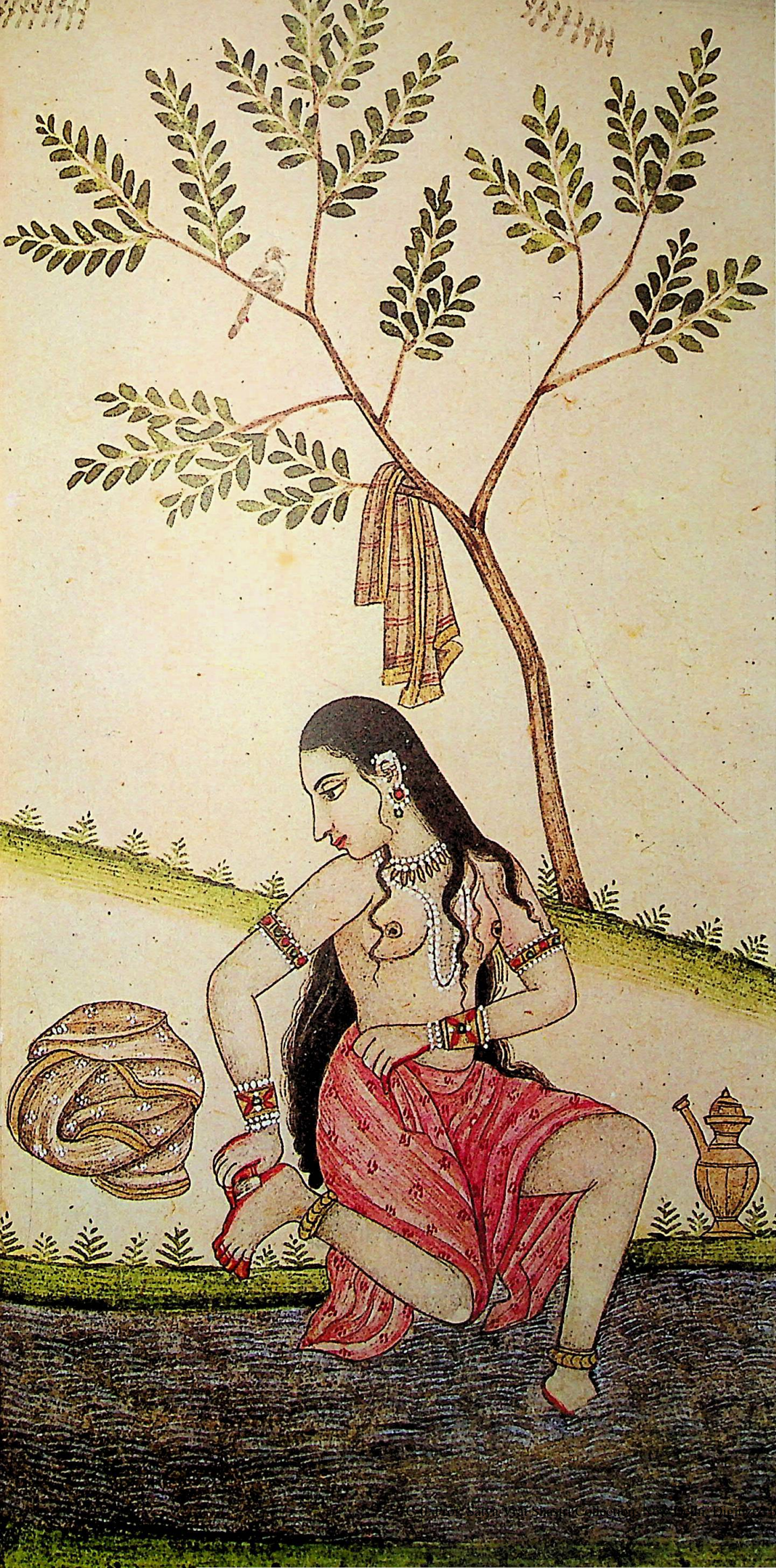
Right: young woman bathing in a river. Indian miniature. (Musée Guimet, Paris.)

distant regions, granting them high office and paying them lavishly. Among them was Ibn Battuta (c. 1304–78), the Moorish traveller, whose *Book of Travels* contains a fascinating account of Islamic society in India in the fourteenth century.

After Tughluq's death India returned to quieter conditions. His cousin, Firoz Shah, who succeeded him was a gentle man, without Muhammad's far-reaching ambition and impetuous tendency to innovate reforms which aroused popular opposition. He reduced taxation, reformed abuses and resettled the displaced communities. Firoz Shah's rule provided a long period of peace which proved a welcome change for his subjects. It did little, however, to prepare them for the storm which was soon to break over their heads.

Timur

At the end of the fourteenth century the Muslim position in India was shaken by the sudden appearance of Timur. Born in 1336,



he was the most ferocious of the nomadic adventurers who came out of central Asia to conquer the world. In one of his early battles he was wounded by an arrow in the leg which left him with a limp. Because of this he became known as Timur-i-lang, Timur the lame, or Tamerlane.

Timur built up his power in central Asia on the remnants of the empire of Genghis Khan. In quick succession he conquered Transoxiana, Persia, Syria, Turkistan and most of Asia Minor. He was then attracted by the wealth of India. In 1398, he proclaimed a holy war against the infidels and descended on India with a vast army. Before his first battle he ordered his troops to kill all the men, to make prisoners of the women and children, and to plunder and lay waste all their property. This instruction became the general pattern of behaviour during the year that Timur's army was in India. At the siege of the fort of Kator 10,000 Hindus were killed in an hour and Timur adopted his usual practice of heaping their skulls in a pile in the shape of a minaret.

Thereafter the demoralised Indians offered only ineffectual resistance to Timur as he moved on Delhi. Eventually Sultan Mahmud gathered an army to oppose him and the two forces met on the field of Panipat outside Delhi. A grim event occurred before the battle which showed Timur's callous disregard for human life. By this time his troops had gathered more than 100,000 Hindu prisoners. As it was felt that they could neither be left in the camp nor released orders were given that they be massacred.

Timur subsequently defeated Sultan Mahmud and sacked Delhi. His undisciplined hordes then cut a wide path of destruction through northern India, displaying ferocious cruelty towards the people, who were killed or carried off into slavery in their thousands.

Although the Tughluq kings continued to rule until 1413, in that brief but harrowing raid Timur effectively destroyed their power and brought the dynasty to an end. Delhi never recovered its importance. For over a century, the Sayyid and Lodi dynasties exercised a weakening control over the Muslim possessions, and regional kingdoms emerged as the sultanate declined. In 1526 it was brought to an end by Babur, a descendant of Timur, who established the Mogul Empire.

INDIA, CHINA AND JAPAN TO A.D. 1000

	India	China	Japan	The West
2300 B.C.	Indus Valley civilisation	Hsia dynasty	Jomon culture (third millenium to third century B.C.)	Sumer Hittite Old Kingdom Egyptian Middle Kingdom Minoan civilisation
1500				
	Aryans enter India	Shang dynasty		Hittite Empire Egyptian New Kingdom Hebrews in Palestine Mycenae
1000		Ch'u dynasty		
	Late Vedic period Jainism Buddhism	Lo-Yang becomes the Ch'u capital Spring and Autumn period	Legendary period Emperor Jimmu	Assyrian Empire Rise of Persia Roman Republic founded
500				
	Death of the Buddha (483)	Death of Confucius (479)		Supremacy of Athens Peloponnesian War
400				
	Alexander the Great in India (326-5) Chandragupta Maurya usurps the throne of Magadha (324)	Period of the 'Warring States'		Gauls sack Rome Alexander the Great
300				
	Asoka Maurya (273-32)	Shih Huang Ti (221-10) The Great Wall (215) Han Dynasty founded (206)	Yakoi culture	Expansion of Rome First Punic War
200				
	Pushyamitra Shunga overthrows Mauryans Indo-Greek kingdoms Menander	Han Wu Ti (140-87) Chinese expansion		Destruction of Carthage (146) Tiberius Gracchus Marius
100				
	Saka (Scythian invasions)			Sulla Julius Caesar
	Kushan dynasty	Later Han The silk road	Introduction of bronze and iron	Augustus Nero Trajan
A.D. 100				
	Kanishka	Buddhism introduced	Queen Himiko	Hadrian Marcus Aurelius
200				
	Buddhism	The Three Kingdoms		Sassanids in Persia Aurelian
300				
	Gupta Empire founded (320) Chandra Gupta II (375-414)	Barbarian invasions A succession of short-lived barbarian states	Contacts with Korea Yamato clan achieves supremacy	Constantine Division of Roman Empire
400				

500	White Hans overthrow Gupta Empire in north India		Emergence of a written language Spread of Buddhism	Great invasions End of the Western Roman Empire (476)
600	Toramana and Mihirakula; decline of the Guptas	Sui dynasty	Dominance of the Soga	Justinian
700	Harsha of Kanauj (606-47)	T'ang dynasty T'ai Tsung (627-49)	Prince Shotoku Golden age of Buddhism	Mohammed Arab conquests
800	Arabs in Sind (712)	Hsüan Tsung (721-56) Contact with Islam	Nara becomes the capital (710) Dokyo Capital transferred to Heiankyo (794)	Charles Martel Charlemagne
900	Rajput kingdom established	Decadence of the T'ong Persecution of Buddhists	Heian period The Fujiwara	Expansion of Scandinavia
1000	Chola dynasty in south India	The Five dynasties The Sung	Development of a feudal system Taira rebellion	Otto the Great Hugh Capet



The civilisation of China

Heroes from the dawn of history; the early emperors give China a central government; the age of the Three Kingdoms; invading nomads threaten China's unity; the brilliance of the T'ang dynasty; a passion for order and a love of reason; islands full of gold and cannibals; the ancient kingdoms of the Mekong delta.

Legendary China

Far to the east of the ancient world, remote and inaccessible across the vast stretches of the Asian land mass, lay China, one of the three great civilisations of antiquity. Like those of early Egypt and Mesopotamia, Chinese civilisation emerged along the banks of a river system, the Huang-ho or Yellow river, in northern China. But while the civilisations of the Nile and the Fertile Crescent have declined, that of China has endured. Thus the people who live in China today can claim the oldest continuously recorded history in the world.

Traditional Chinese historians trace their country's history back some five thousand years to the legendary achievements of the early pioneers of civilisation and culture. Foremost among these are: P'an Ku, the creator of heaven and earth; Fu Hsi, the ox-tamer, the patron of hunting and animal husbandry; Shen Nung, the patron of agriculture and medicine; and Huang Ti, the 'Yellow Emperor', a warrior and empire builder who is supposed to have reigned in the twenty-seventh century B.C.

The exploits of these early heroes in this pre-historic age reflect the transition of early Chinese civilisation from a nomadic hunting existence to a more settled agricultural economy.

Other discoveries which represent the cultural origins of the Chinese people are also traced to this early period. Fu Hsi is credited with evolving the 'eight trigrams', a series of mystical diagrammatic forms which are regarded by some scholars as the first attempts at a written language. Shen Nung apparently experimented with knotted string, another early form of communication. Chinese characters were then evolved during the reign of Huang Ti.

The discovery was reputedly made by one of his ministers named Ts'ang Chieh, who studied the pattern of the stars in the heavens and the footprints of birds and animals on sand and saw that things could be represented by different signs. Huang Ti is also credited with the invention of the

'south-pointing chariot', which is the modern compass. The rearing of silk worms and the manufacture of silk threads were apparently discovered by Lo Tsu, his wife.

The early dynasties

The emergence of a more closely integrated political society in the twenty-fourth and twenty-third centuries B.C. is recalled in the behaviour of the three model kings, Yao, Shun and Yü. Tradition has it that Yao introduced the ideal of good government by abdicating, not in favour of his son but of Shun, an able fisherman and farmer.

In turn, Shun relinquished the throne to Yü, another able commoner. Yü the Great devoted himself to engineering and water servancy works and is credited with founding the Hsia dynasty (2000-1500 B.C.), the first state to figure in Chinese prehistory.

The last of the Hsia rulers was so evil that the people arose in revolt and established a new dynasty, the Shang. This dynasty is described in some detail in early Chinese classical texts. Ssuma Chien, a historian who wrote in the first century B.C., listed about thirty of the early Shang kings.

Despite this, for a long time many doubted whether the Shang dynasty could have had any real historical existence. However, about fifty years ago large numbers of so-called 'dragon bones' appeared on sale on the streets of Peking, to be ground up for medicinal purposes. When these were examined they were found to be inscribed with ancient styles of writing. It was realised that they were in fact oracle bones, used in ancient times for divinistic purposes.

Archaeological excavations were made between 1929-1933 at the site where these 'dragon bones' had been found and about 100,000 pieces were recovered, the majority of which have been deciphered by scholars.

The Bronze Age culture of the north

These excavations carried out at the site of the ancient Shang capital near An-yang, in



插秧
 雨麥秋潤午風槐
 涼溪南與溪北笑
 插新秧拋擲不停
 左右無亂行我教
 秧馬代勞民莫忘



China was a vast and populous country, but most of it was mountainous and only one-seventh could be cultivated. Thus agriculture was an important activity which was carefully encouraged by the authorities. This picture, taken from an eighteenth-century book, shows farmers walking backwards planting rice. Extract from *The Life of the Emperors of China*. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)

northern Honan province, have given us a more detailed understanding of early Chinese history. The writing on the oracle bones and the magnificent bronze urns and implements which have also been recovered show that the Shang people enjoyed a mature Bronze Age culture in northern China during 1523–1027 B.C. Moreover, greater authenticity has been given to the traditional accounts found in the early classical texts. It is remarkable that the oracle bones so far deciphered record twenty-three of the thirty Shang kings listed by Ssuma Chien.

It is now generally accepted that by 1500 B.C. a highly gifted people, obviously with a long history of development behind them, had emerged with a distinctive culture in northern China. These people lived in large houses and had a highly developed agricultural economy which at one stage used cowrie shells as a medium of exchange. They employed skilled artisans who worked in bronze and jade, creating delicate ornaments and magnificent urns, which were frequently inscribed and buried as an expression of the prevailing ancestor worship practised by the early Chinese.

The first empires

In the eleventh century B.C. these gifted people were overwhelmed by the Chou, a nomadic tribe from the western regions. The Chou, who were consolidators rather than innovators, readily accepted much of the Shang achievement. Work in bronze, textiles and pottery continued, and the written language was developed. Politically, the Chou formalised the loose feudal structure which had emerged under the Shang. They divided their territory into fiefs under a new aristocracy and based the economy on the agricultural produce of a large peasant class.

There were clearly defined social grades and concepts of tribute and chivalrous behaviour between the nobles, which had marked similarities to the type of feudalism which was to develop more than 1,000 years later in Europe. However, the Chou failed to establish their control on a formal contractual relationship. As a result the Chou kings exercised only nominal sovereignty from their capital near Sian.

From the beginning there were signs of political instability, and the numerous small principalities tended to break away. They also failed to withstand the continual pressure from the nomadic tribes of the north and north-west.

The Spring and Autumn period

In the eighth century B.C. the Chou tried to place themselves in a stronger defensive position by moving their capital eastwards to Lo-yang. The ensuing period, 772–481



Above: T'ang the Victorious, who founded the Chang dynasty about 1700 B.C.
Above and right: his warriors. During the first 1,000 years of the Chinese Empire the Chinese foot soldier marched into the tropical regions of Southeast Asia and across the mountainous ranges of Central Asia, carrying his supplies on his back, in campaigns which often lasted for years.
Extract from *The Life of the Emperors of China*. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)



B.C., is known as the *Ch'un Ch'iu*, or 'Spring and Autumn period', a name which is taken from the account of these years in the annals of the state of Ly, where Confucius was born.

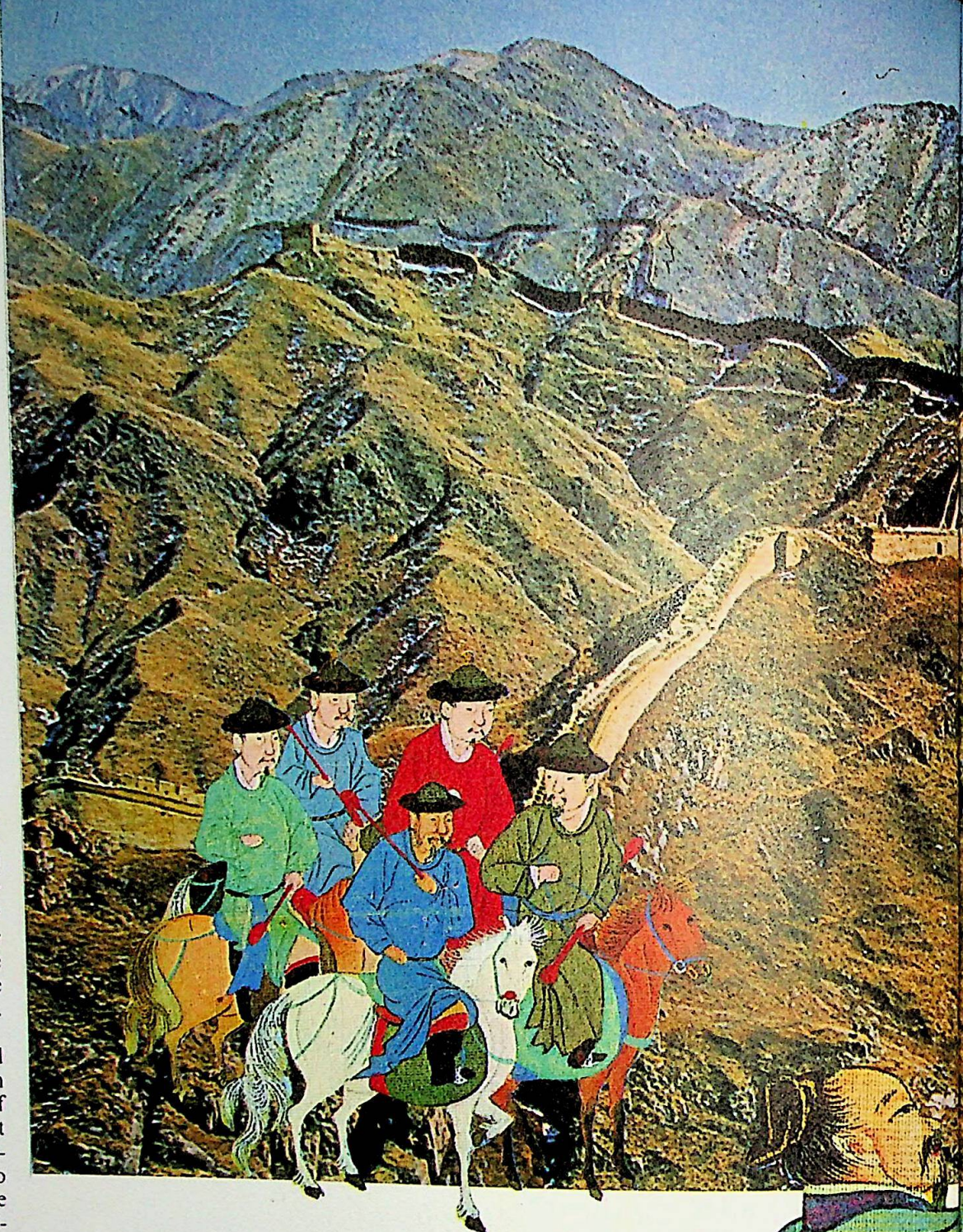
Over the next three hundred years about twenty-five semi-independent states contended for feudal hegemony, and slowly undermined Chou authority. It was a time of population expansion, significant advances in craftsmanship, the growth of a money economy and changes in military techniques. The age also saw a gradual shift from the use of bronze to that of iron. Horse-archers, using the newly perfected crossbow, replaced the ancient and slower-moving two-wheeled chariots of the Shang.

It was also a time of significant intellectual advances. The complex political situation led to the appearance of innumerable advisers who attached themselves to the various feudal lords and formed contending schools of thought. The famous philosophers Confucius, Mencius and Chuang Tzu lived during this period of the 'hundred schools', from which sprang China's great philosophical traditions.

By the fourth century B.C. the fight for supremacy between the states had become harsher and more uncompromising. The chivalrous behaviour of the early feudal period was replaced by a relentless fight for survival. One after another the smaller states were absorbed by their increasingly ruthless neighbours. This change in the character of the age is reflected in a change in name, and the period from 403–221 B.C. is known as that of the 'Warring States'.

The western state of Ch'in emerged triumphant in this situation. Its statesmen rejected the moral political philosophy of Confucius, with its gentle emphasis on right behaviour. Instead they adopted the uncompromising outlook of the Legalists, who offered the Machiavellian advice that the end justified the means and that the individual should be subordinated to the state. Acting on these principles, the Ch'in rulers systematically set about strengthening the central power of the state. A bureaucracy was introduced, irrigation works were carried out by forced labour, and the population was pressed into military service. One by one, the surrounding states were conquered, and in 222 B.C. Ch'u, the last and greatest of its opponents, was absorbed. King Cheng who completed this task then adopted the title Shih Huang Ti and proclaimed himself ruler of the first centralised empire in Chinese history.

The Ch'in brought about lasting changes which profoundly influenced the subsequent course of Chinese history. They introduced standard taxes, weights and measures, and laws. They rigorously controlled the thought of the educated class and reputedly burnt innumerable philosophical and political books. To improve communications, they built an elaborate network of roads and

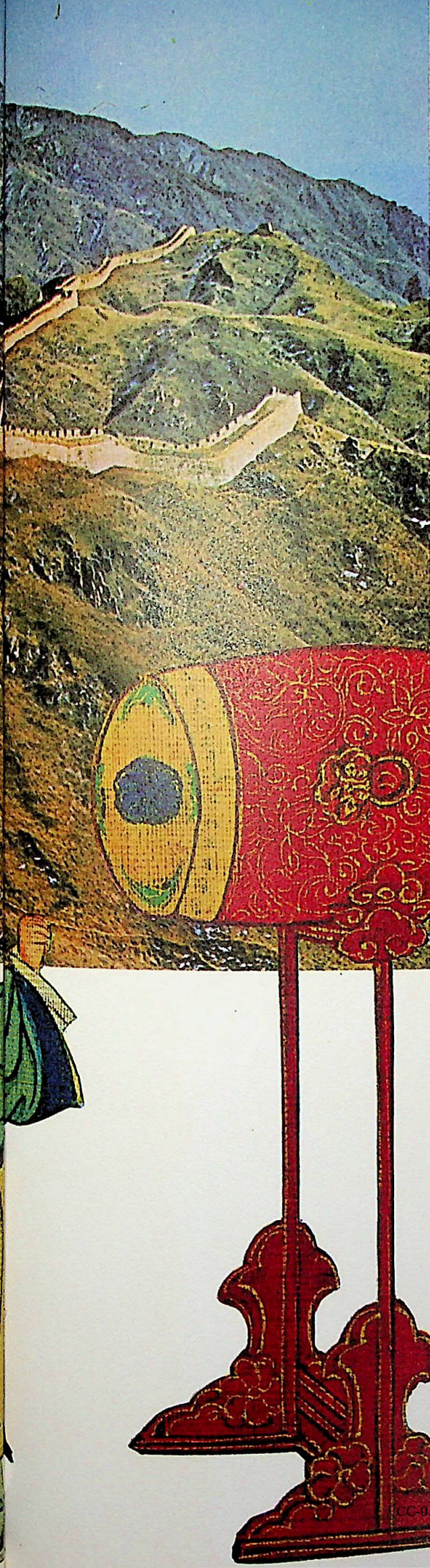


Above: the Great Wall of China was completed by the first emperor, Ch'in Shih Huang Ti, to keep out the hordes from the northern steppes. It stretched for over 2,000 miles across the entire length of China's northern borders, wide enough at the top to allow three horsemen to ride abreast, and with garrisoned outposts every 200 yards. It is said that it is the only man-made object on earth which would be visible from the moon.

Right: a visitor announcing himself at the palace of Yao by beating on a drum.

Far right: detail of a picture of horsemen playing an equestrian game. Extracts from The Life of the Emperors of China. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)





canals, largely by forced labour. Ch'in armies moved out into Mongolia and south into Vietnam.

Undoubtedly, their greatest effort was the building of the Great Wall. This stupendous achievement stretched for 1,500 miles along the northern borders of China, from the eastern coast to the mountainous ranges of the interior. The aim of the Ch'in rulers was to establish a secure bulwark between the rich agricultural land which they had conquered and the wide expanses to the north, across which the hordes of marauding nomads customarily appeared.

However, the Ch'in had lost internal control before they could test their wall. Harsh laws, enforced labour and the con-

a sophisticated and many-sided society which was a dazzling model for the ancient world in the east.

To gain popular support, the early Han emperors repealed the stringent Ch'in laws, ostensibly supported feudalism and rejected the doctrines of the Legalists. Confucianism was encouraged, both as a state religion and as a code of moral behaviour for the individual. During the first part of the period, known as the Former Han dynasty, assemblies of scholars gathered to debate constitutional matters, examine the ancient writings, discuss the economic state of the country and decide on such abstruse problems as whether the salt and iron industries should be nationalised.



tinuous drive for military expansion aroused a brooding sense of discontent among the people. In 210 B.C. Shih Huang Ti died, and was succeeded by a weak son. Revolts broke out, and the empire which its founder had meant to endure for 10,000 generations passed to the second of the great dynasties of ancient China, the Han.

The Han dynasty

During the Han period (206 B.C.—A.D. 220) cultural, political and institutional developments since Shang times combined to form

However, it soon became clear that the governmental control established by the Ch'in was to be maintained. Through a number of centralising moves, the feudal privileges which had been restored at the beginning of the reign were gradually removed. New laws of inheritance divided up the large estates and the status of the nobles was slowly reduced.

In their place a competent civil service was established, which was based on ability not birth. Entry to this elite was decided by a man's knowledge of the Confucian classics. As the system grew, it became customary for scholars to spend arduous years perfecting themselves in the classics and in mastering the intricacies of the essay, success in which was awarded by appointment to the government bureaucracy.

Inevitably, a conformist view was encouraged which strengthened Han control. By the time of Han Wu Ti (140–87 B.C.) a

system of direct rule had been perfected. From the capital of Chang-an (modern Sian) the imperial jurisdiction and its Confucian concepts of just and ethical rule extended over north and central China.

Attempts at internal control were matched by efforts to consolidate and to extend the Chinese frontiers. Punitive measures were taken against the south, which had broken away under a rebellious Ch'in governor at the beginning of the Han period. But efforts to subdue the Nam-Viet, as the area covering Kwangtung, Kwangsi and Vietnam was known, were only moderately successful, and the region remained semi-independent until pacified by the later T'ang. During Han times the threat of external invasion came not from the south but from the north.

Here the various nomadic tribes—the Hsiung-nu, Yueh-chih and Tungus—provided a constant threat. Attempts were made to repair the Great Wall and to garrison troops along its length, but these defensive measures were only moderately effective against the fast-riding nomadic bowmen.

The martial emperor

When Wu Ti, the 'Martial Emperor', came to the throne a new policy was adopted. He attempted to meet the growing challenge of the Hsiung-nu by forming an alliance with their historic enemies, the Yueh-chih, who had been defeated by the Hsiung-nu and driven westwards. In 138 B.C. he sent one of his generals, Chang Ch'ien, to the Yueh-chih, but by this time the tribe had disappeared into central Asia. Undeterred, the worthy general followed in their trail only to be captured by the Hsiung-nu and imprisoned for ten years.

When he escaped he continued with his mission, crossing Ili, Ferghana and Bactria, the territory which had also been explored by Alexander the Great. Eventually he found the Yueh-chih in the region of present-day Khiva, on a tributary of the Amu Darya (Oxus). Understandably, they refused to involve themselves in Chinese affairs once more and Chang Ch'ien travelled for another year in order to report back to his imperial master, during which time he was once again imprisoned by the Huns.

Although he failed in his mission Chang Ch'ien brought back a wealth of information on central Asia. In particular, Wu Ti's interest was aroused by his report of the speed and beauty of the 'heavenly' horses of Ferghana, which took on a blood-red hue when they sweated.

The Chinese emperor was determined to obtain some, so as to improve the strain of the rather puny steppe ponies then available in China, which were ineffective against the well mounted nomadic raiders. Accordingly, an envoy was sent to obtain some, but was rebuffed. Wu Ti then decided on a show of force and a Chinese army of 60,000 men was sent 2,000 miles across central Asia to

enforce the imperial will.

This Chinese move into central Asia had important consequences for both east and west. For centuries the overland route was the natural line of communication, along which the laden caravans carried the countless bales of gossamer-thin Chinese silk, the Seres cloth so highly prized in the Roman world. In return came swift Sogdian horses, Roman gold, the steady spread of Persian and Indian influence and, above all, Buddhist religious ideals.

Wu Ti's expansive urge into central Asia gave new dimensions to the Chinese state, but it was expensive. It has been estimated that during 129–90 B.C. China lost a quarter of a million of its best fighting men there.

After Wu Ti's death, palace intrigues by ambitious eunuchs, the political activity of powerful families and rising social discontent steadily undermined the imperial authority. Large estates were built up and maintained by private armies, which destroyed the careful administrative balance originally established by the Han.

During A.D. 9–23 a reforming minister, Wang Mang, seized control and initiated a series of reforms. Although the government later reasserted its authority, the underlying discontent encouraged unrest and rebellions. Prominent amongst these were the Yellow Turban rebellion and the revolt of the Five Pecks of Rice band, which devastated large areas and brought the country close to disaster. A military struggle for control followed which dominated the politics of the declining years of the Han dynasty.

The centuries of change

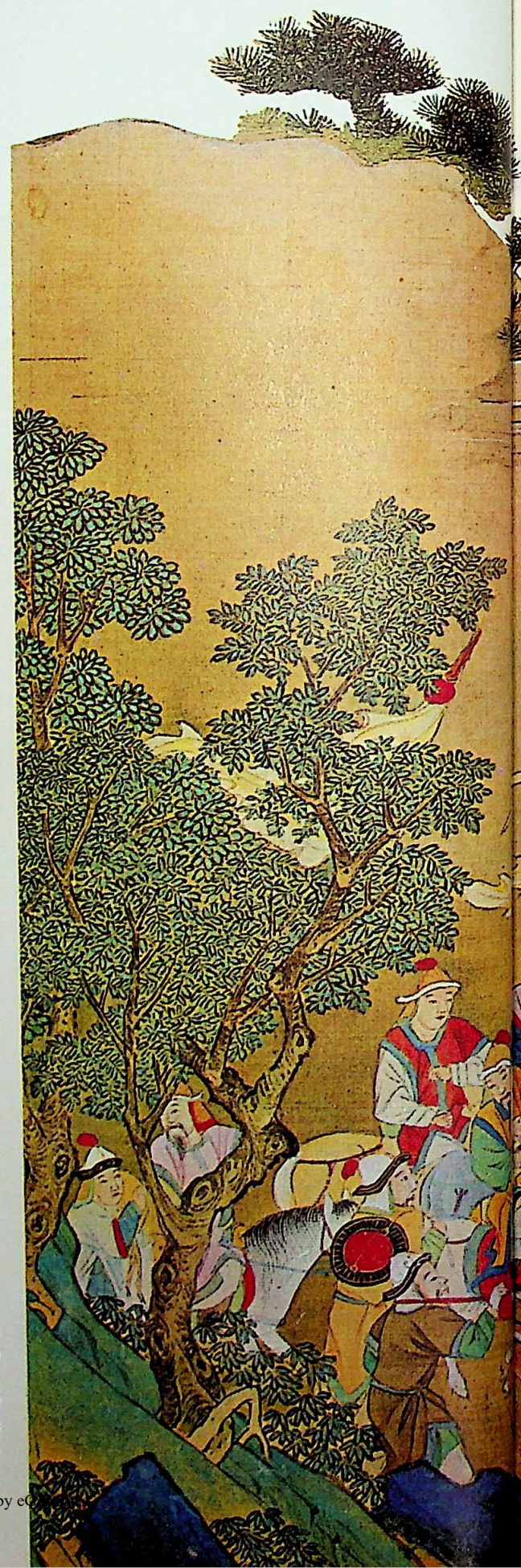
The struggle for the succession of the Han dynasty during the third century A.D. is one of the most stirring episodes in Chinese history. It is known as the age of the Three Kingdoms, and the exploits of the protagonists have been immortalised in tradition and legend.

On the one side was Ts'ao Ts'ao, the villainous and powerful tyrant of Wei. Matched against him was Liu Pei, king of Shu, and his sworn brothers-in-arms, Chang Fei and Kuan Yu, the last-named being later deified as the god of war. The adventures of the three heroes and their continuing loyalty to one another are a part of the popular Chinese literary tradition. On more than one occasion they were helped by the minister Chuko Liang, a strategist whose ruses often saved his side from defeat.

One of these stories tells of the occasion when the heroes ran short of arrows while beleaguered on an island. The wily minister set up straw figures dressed as warriors on a boat and sailed it against the foe, who shot the figures full of arrows which were then collected and used again.

The Wei emerged victorious in the middle of the third century, but Ts'ao Ts'ao's son was not strong enough to hold the throne.

One of his generals, Ssu-ma Yen, then established the short-lived Chin dynasty, which collapsed in A.D. 290.



Below: an emperor returning from the hunt. Ancient China was covered with forests and marshlands which sheltered a very rich animal life: stags, wild boar, bears, tigers—game of all kinds. The big royal hunts resulted in much slaughter. By the time of Shih Huang Ti and the Han, the clearing of land for cultivation had made considerable progress. Eventually hunting had to be restricted. Extract from The Life of the Emperors of China. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)





Pressure from the north

The struggle for internal control was made more complex by the pressure of the barbarian tribes strung out along China's northern borders. Both in the east and the west, this was the first great age of the Turkic and Mongol peoples. For centuries they had dominated the central Asian trade routes, spilling out and driving lesser tribes before them, towards the Roman and Han empires. By the fourth century this pressure proved irresistible.

In the west, the Huns drove the Ostrogoths, Visigoths, Franks, Alemanni and Vandals across the Roman frontiers, bringing about the collapse of political control. In the east, where the Huns were known as the Hsung-nu, they pushed south of the Great Wall to overrun the greater part of northern China. In China, as in the Roman west, their impact was not entirely destruc-

tive. Some of the tribes, who had already absorbed a considerable amount of Chinese culture while stationed along the northern borders, were content to settle, bringing with them vigorous ideas and new social customs.

During the fourth and fifth centuries numerous small kingdoms were set up by these tribes in northern China. One such group, the T'o-pa clan, established the Northern Wei dynasty (A.D. 386-532), which achieved a considerable cultural level.

One important consequence of the barbarian invasions was that many Chinese fled into central and southern China. There they adapted to their new surroundings, growing rice instead of millet, and acquiring new social customs, among which was the practice of drinking tea. Various short-lived dynasties were also established in the south, which competed against one another as well as against the equally precarious states of

their northern neighbours.

Between the fourth and sixth centuries China passed through a period of political fragmentation as well as a time of change and constructive growth. This resulted in a vastly extended political entity when the country was once again reunited in the sixth and seventh centuries by the Sui and the T'ang.

The spread of Buddhism

Mahayana Buddhism, with its emphasis on faith and participation, mutual help and the goodwill of others, had a wide appeal. It was this form of Buddhism which spread along the central Asian trade routes into China and Japan. During the barbarian invasions of the third to the sixth centuries the religion expanded rapidly, largely because the nomads who set up the numerous kingdoms in north China were more inclined



to support beliefs which were already familiar to them.

In time, Indian missionaries such as the monks Dharmaraksa and Kumarajiva travelled to China to explain the faith and to translate the scriptures. In return Chinese pilgrims, the most notable of whom was Fahsien, made their way along the perilous Old Silk road to study Buddhism at its source.

The work of these men changed China's religious outlook. During the centuries of political disunity there was a widespread decline of Confucianism, which appealed only to the educated administrative class. Buddhism, on the other hand, offered the calm monastic life as an escape from uncertainty, and the promise of salvation after death. By the sixth century, when the Sui reunited the country, Buddhism had spread among all classes of the people.

Reunification

The concept of imperial unity, which had first been achieved by the Ch'in and the Han, was recovered in the sixth and seventh centuries by the Sui and the T'ang. There were only two emperors of the short-lived Sui dynasty, but they managed to re-establish the trend towards centralised government in China. Through their efforts the Great Wall was restored, canals were dug and communications were improved between the north and the south.

However, the numerous wars in which the second Sui emperor was involved aroused strong internal opposition. One of his officials, named Li Yuan, aided by his strong-minded son, Li Shih-min, rose in revolt and established the T'ang dynasty in A.D. 618.

During the T'ang dynasty (618-907) China experienced one of the most glorious eras of its history. A number of capable rulers restored imperial control. In turn, T'ai

After the Han, the Sui dynasty (589-618) was a very short one. However, the emperor Yang-Ti made the court of Lo Yang a wonderful place. In autumn, for example, flowers and fallen leaves were replaced by pieces of iridescent silk.

Above: Yang-Ti indulges in his favourite pursuit, riding through his park accompanied by pretty girls who recite poems and songs. In the Sui period fashion dictated that women should be slender with complicated head-dresses and elaborate costumes.

Right: four courtesans. In the Sui period women played an active part in society. It was not until the tenth century, when it became customary for them to bind their feet, that their social status was reduced. Extracts from The Life of the Emperors of China. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)



Tsung (626–649), Kao Tsung (649–683), and a remarkable woman, the empress Wu, reorganised and systematised the land-holdings of the previous centuries, opening up new agricultural areas and encouraging economic development. The growth of population and the shift in the economic centre of the country from the wheat and millet land of the north China plain to the rich rice-growing fields of central China brought prosperity and an ample income for the government.

Chang-an, the capital, conveniently located at the eastern end of the central Asian trade routes, yet strategically placed to act as a natural focus for the economic and cultural life of the country, was a glittering metropolis which attracted travellers from all over the known world. The city, with a population of close on 2,000,000, extended five miles from north to south and

six miles across. Within its walls were large, cosmopolitan markets, parks, temples and richly equipped palaces. The main thoroughfare, fully 500 feet wide, stretched the length of the city, lined by statues and stately trees and thronged with innumerable passers-by.

With their internal control assured, the T'ang systematically set out to subdue the surrounding territories. In a series of brilliant military campaigns T'ai Tsung conquered his former allies, the eastern Turks, and assumed the title of 'Heavenly Khan'. He then moved against the western Turks, occupying the Tarim Basin and extending Chinese rule right to the Oxus valley. At the same time T'ang armies drove southwards into Vietnam and set up a protectorate over the area.

Under Kao Tsung, the Chinese pushed towards the north-east, and the Korean kingdoms of Silla and Paekche were brought

under their control. By the eighth century the T'ang Empire was the largest the world had ever seen.

The reign of Hsüan Tsung

The high point of the T'ang achievement was reached during the reign of Hsüan Tsung (712–756). It was a brilliant age which produced matchless works of art in pottery, painting and sculpture. Above all, this was the golden age of Chinese poetry. The work of Tu Fu (712–770), Li Po (701–762), Wang Wei (699–760), and others emerges in a dazzling way from this period. Their unforgettable verse is at once an arresting landmark in the country's literary heritage and a poignant and delicate commentary on the customs and feelings of an age.

However, the high point reached at this time also marked the beginning of the

Right: Li Shih-Min, who became T'sai-Tsang, was the founder and the greatest emperor of the T'ang dynasty. He was faithful to the traditions and this picture shows him forbidding the striking of criminals on the back, because this was contrary to the teaching of the old books. Far right: this tender care contrasted strongly with the cruelty of many emperors who took pleasure in cutting their victims in two or throwing them in boiling oil. Extracts from The Life of the Emperors of China. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)



decline of the T'ang. Like his predecessors, Hsüan Tsung pursued the imperial ideal and sought to extend Chinese suzerainty into central Asia. By the mid-century his armies had reached the Hindu Kush.

Here the Chinese came up against the Arabs, a different sort of foe from the Uighurs and Turks to whom they were accustomed. In 751 the westward advance of the Chinese was decisively and finally halted at the battle of Talas near Ferghana, the region which had previously been explored by the armies of the Han.

After the setback Hsüan Tsung never recovered his position in central Asia. During the remaining years of his reign he was increasingly preoccupied with internal difficulties. Economic hardship brought about by an expanding population, the growth of large private estates and burdensome taxation led to widespread political discontent.

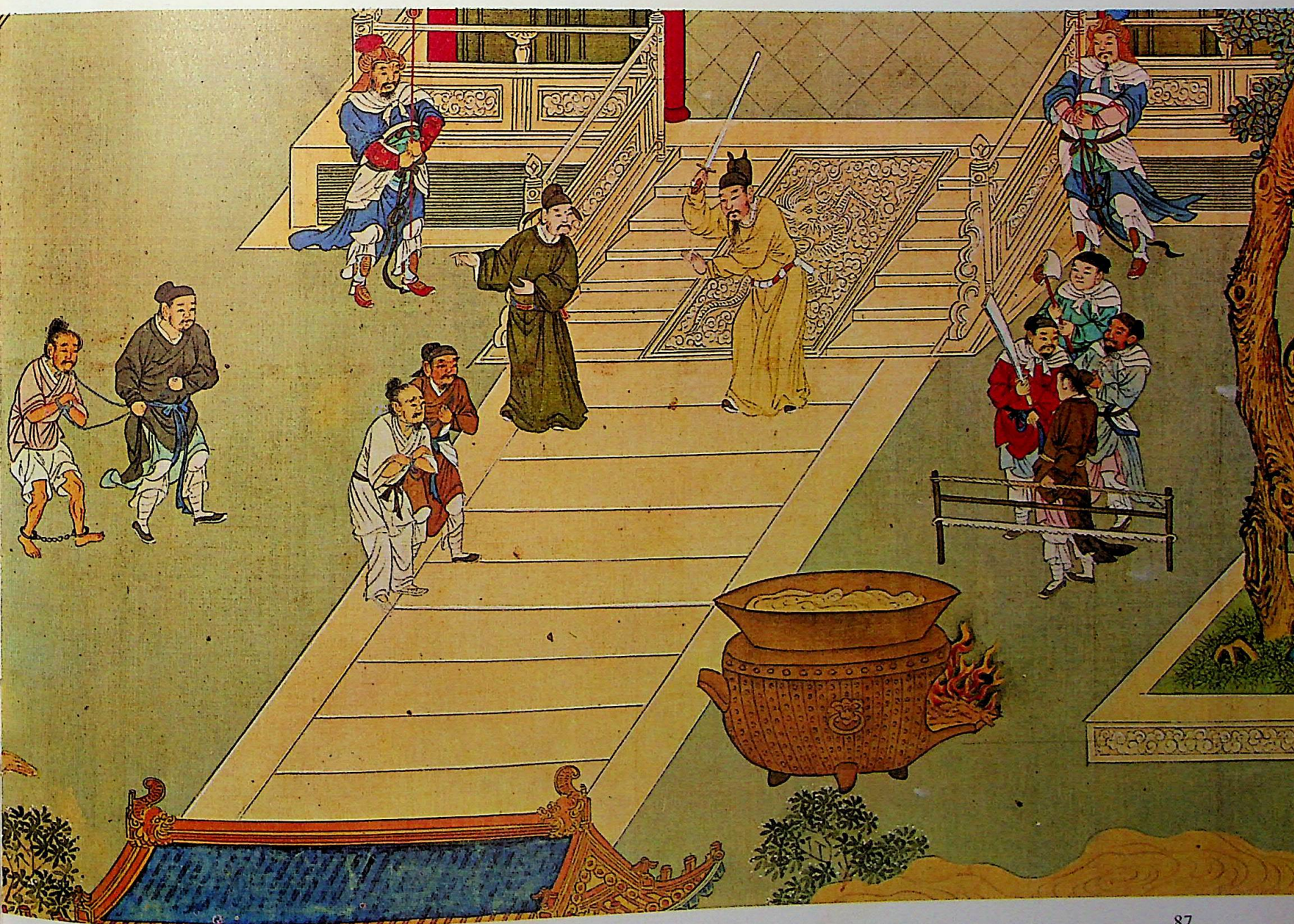
A personal tragedy is woven into Hsüan Tsung's remaining years. In 745 the aging emperor fell in love with Yang Kuei-fei, the beautiful young concubine of one of his sons. He made her his consort, raised her brother to political power in the government, and extended his patronage to a young general named An Lu-shan, to whom Yang Kuei-fei was attracted. As public feeling grew against the emperor's behaviour, the ambitious young general rose in revolt and captured the capital, forcing the emperor to flee, accompanied by Yang Kuei-fei and her brother. On the road, Hsüan Tsung's discontented bodyguard executed the two favourites, and the heart-broken emperor then abdicated his throne.

After Hsüan Tsung, the rich and varied cultural activity of the T'ang continued. The work of the elegant stylist Han Yü (768-824), whose essays became models for

scholars of subsequent ages, and the splendid poetry of Po Chü-i, who disciplined his art to make it understandable to the common people, both appeared at this time. But the age lacked the grandeur of the earlier period.

Growing financial and economic difficulties led to widespread unrest. To an increasing extent the hard-pressed government began to covet the fabulous wealth of the Buddhist monasteries, which by this time had developed the original simple teaching into a number of complex philosophical sects. During 841-845 violent persecutions occurred and thousands of monasteries were dispossessed. In the latter part of the ninth century the familiar pattern was repeated of popular risings and military intervention, bringing the dynasty to an end in 906.

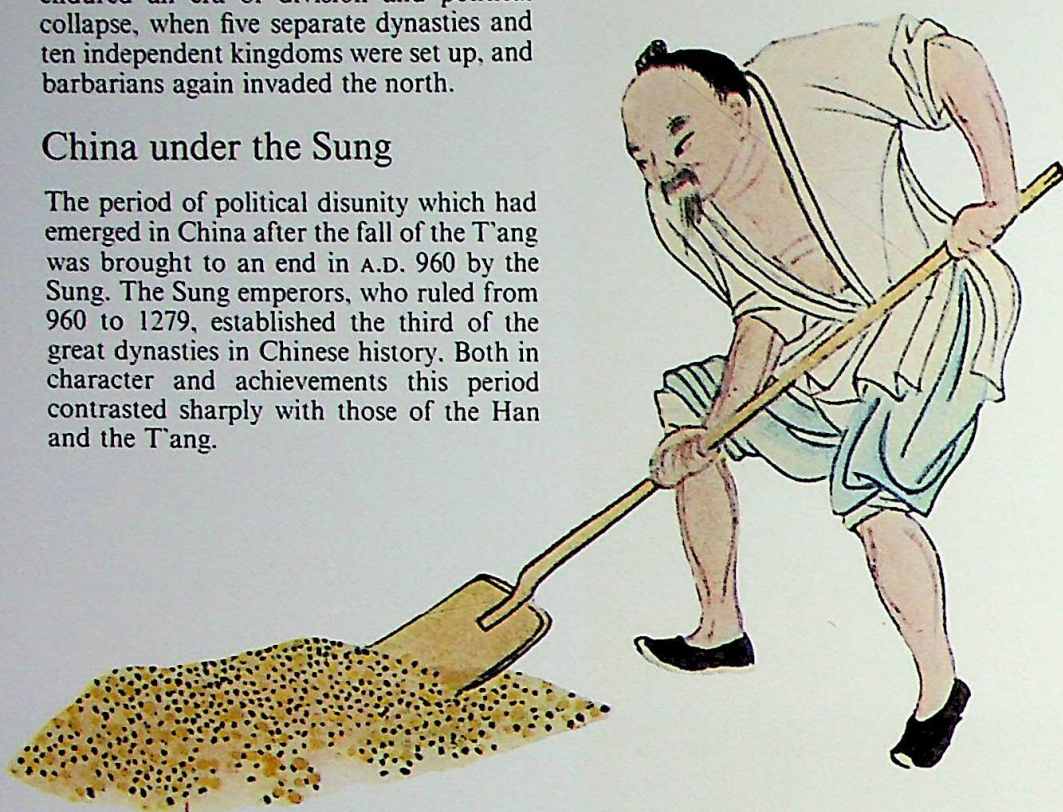
For the next fifty years China once again



endured an era of division and political collapse, when five separate dynasties and ten independent kingdoms were set up, and barbarians again invaded the north.

China under the Sung

The period of political disunity which had emerged in China after the fall of the T'ang was brought to an end in A.D. 960 by the Sung. The Sung emperors, who ruled from 960 to 1279, established the third of the great dynasties in Chinese history. Both in character and achievements this period contrasted sharply with those of the Han and the T'ang.



For 1,000 years, from the time when the Ch'in had first united the country, the Chinese had been outward-looking and expansionist, displaying a confident and aggressive attitude in foreign affairs which had enabled them to extend Chinese influence far into central Asia, Korea and Annam. In the mid-T'ang period this expansive phase came to an end.

The steady pressure of barbarian tribes along the northern and western land frontiers created a critical problem for the Chinese during the tenth and eleventh centuries. Military much weaker and increasingly forced to rely on mercenaries, the pacifically inclined Sung people slowly yielded to the barbarian pressure from the north. From the beginning they had to come to terms with the powerful Liao kingdom of the Tartars, which dominated Manchuria, Mongolia and a substantial part of northern China. To keep them pacified the Sung abandoned China's traditional policy of demanding tribute in recognition of Chinese suzerainty. Instead, an annual tribute of gold and silk was sent to the Liao.

In the twelfth century, during the reign of Hui Tsung, the Jurchen tribes to the north of the Liao arose in revolt. The Sung rather unwisely formed an alliance with them, with the intention of bringing the Liao more under control. It was a disastrous move. The Jurchen swept south, completely defeated the Liao in A.D. 1125 and set up the Chin dynasty.

The Sung made desperate efforts to come to terms with their new and belligerent neighbours, but within a few years a Chin army had raided the Sung capital at K'ai-feng, capturing the emperor and most of his

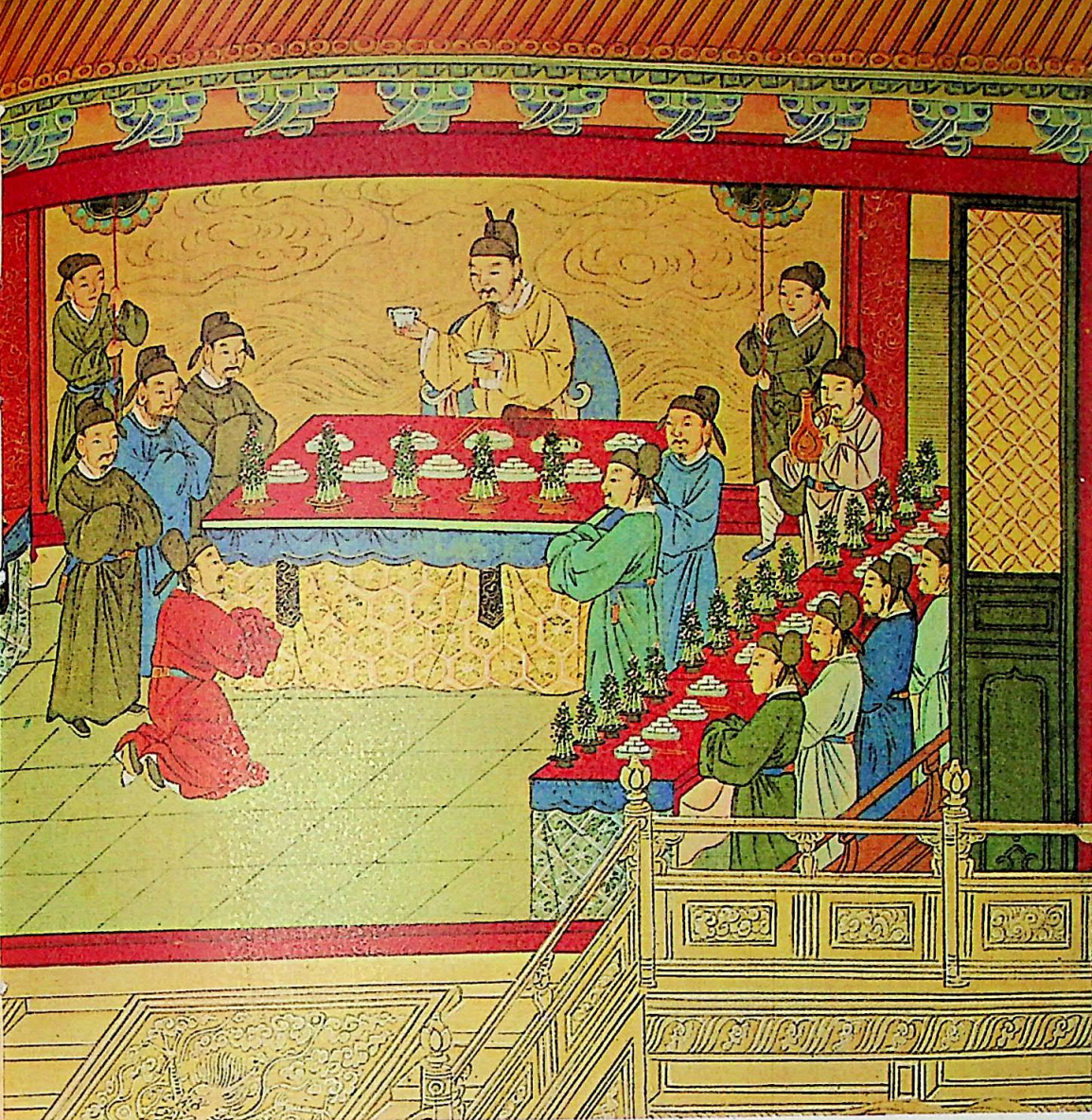
court. The remnants of the Sung government then fled to the south where they regrouped themselves under a son of Hui Tsung, who formed the Southern Sung dynasty with his capital at Hangchow.

In this new political setting the dynasty made a surprising recovery and developed new activities, leaving an impressive record of achievement over the next 150 years, when it was finally conquered by the Mongols of Kublai Khan.

The move to the south did not interrupt the steady development of technical knowledge which is characteristic of the Sung

period. Significant advances were made in the fields of medicine, biology, architecture, mathematics as well as military techniques. References in Chinese writings around A.D. 1000 show that the explosive qualities of gunpowder, known in China from early times, were effectively applied with catapults against the Chin. Also, after their move to the south, the Sung used their increased technical knowledge in water irrigation and conservancy measures, thereby improving the food supply for the large numbers of people who fled to the area from the north.





Above: the Emperor Hui Tsung presides over a banquet. The emperor, as the Son of Heaven, had the responsibility of acting in a manner which displayed his high station, and living a life of luxury which reflected the prosperity of the empire. Extract from *The Life of the Emperors of China*. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)
 Left and far left: the common people made this prosperity possible through their labour. Extract from *The Cultivation of Rice*. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)



Maritime trade expands

Sung activity in maritime commerce, in particular, was stimulated by the southern move. From Han times Chinese vessels had traded along the coast and down into southeast Asia, but the greater part of China's foreign trade had been carried overland. The decline of Chinese influence in

central Asia during the later T'ang period then encouraged the pattern to change, leading to a steady growth in importance of maritime traffic between the eighth and the thirteenth centuries. Improved methods of navigation and the construction of larger and more seaworthy ships aided in this development.

At the same time, Arab and Persian merchants operating in southeast Asian waters displayed a growing interest in Chinese goods, which were abundantly available after the long period of T'ang prosperity. As a result there was a significant expansion of oceanic trade during the Sung period. This trade was initially under Arab and Persian control and sizeable foreign communities were to be found at various posts along the China coast. However, under the southern Sung the traffic passed into the hands of Chinese merchants who rapidly came to dominate the trade in precious silks, fine Chinese handicrafts and porcelains which were in demand in southeast Asia and further afield.

To a large extent, the growth in this overseas luxury trade reflected the expanding Chinese economy. Despite their recurrent political difficulties, the Sung people lived in a period of rich technical and cultural achievement, which saw the full flowering of centuries of creative development. The artistic perfection of Sung porcelain, particularly the delicately tinted green celadon ware, was even at that time justly prized. The Sung genius also expressed itself in painting. With the decline of Buddhism, artists turned away from religious themes and began to experiment in impressionistic landscape and nature paintings.

The development of printing

A vigorous intellectual activity matched these cultural achievements. Literature, which had broken new ground in the T'ang period, flourished and took on new forms. There was a rapid increase in the number of schools and academies. The popular pursuits of urban life, with its theatres, tea-shops and restaurants, generally reflected the high literacy of the people.

To a large extent, the intellectual renaissance of the Sung is to be explained by the advances made in printing and book production in this period. From Han times the Chinese had followed the practice of carving classical texts on stone and seals in wood or metal for official and private use. This led to the development of wood-block printing, which was used extensively during the Buddhist centuries for the production of religious texts. When the blocks were printed in series and then folded the Chinese form of the book appeared. A Buddhist *sutra* was printed in this way in A.D. 868. During the following century the whole of the ancient classics was similarly produced. Printing was extensively developed during



Above: an emperor on a tour of inspection surrounded by his retainers. However, travel in traditional China was usually laborious. From *The Life of the Emperors of China*. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)

the Sung period, mostly in block form but with some experimentation in movable type.

As in the West at the time of the Renaissance when the printed book became available, the discovery led to significant advances in scholarship. Vast compilations were made of the classics, early historical records and encyclopedias. This habit, which had developed in late T'ang times, was pursued by the Sung and continued by the succeeding dynasties, turning the Chinese

into the most assiduous compilers of documents in the world. Inevitably, this literary activity aroused a critical spirit and a closer awareness of the classical works so carefully collected. It occurred as well at a time when Buddhism was beginning to lose its hold and when there was a revival of interest in Confucianism and in early Chinese philosophical and political ideals.

Through the efforts of a number of scholars the basic tenets of Confucianism



were reinterpreted, reaching a high point of synthesis in the work of Chu Hsi (1130-1200), who established the orthodox view which was to dominate the Chinese outlook until the nineteenth century.

The Chinese outlook

From the beginning the Chinese were intensely naturalistic and rational in their view of the world. In early Chinese thought

there was very little speculation on the origin of creation. The emergence of civilisation was not attributed to a divine will, but to the intelligence of the ancient sages. Similarly, the evolution of a well-ordered society was regarded essentially as the work of human endeavour.

Human efforts and the welfare of society were likely to be successful if they were in harmony with nature, or rather, with the natural and appointed order of things.

Social disorder indicated a violation of the cosmic order, and the instinctive reaction was to restore that balance of forces which would place man in harmony with nature.

This belief lay at the root of the Chinese philosophical outlook. In its broadest terms, there was the concept of the interaction of *yang* and *yin*, the male and female elements, from which all things and relationships flowed.

The inter-relationships of nature, to which man's behaviour should accord, were also represented in the qualities of the five elements, wood, metal, fire, water and earth, each of which acted on the other in a pre-determined way. The early naturalists of the Chou period dwelt on the mystical force of these connections and, in time, their theories were written into the content of Taoist and even Confucian thought.

This passion for order and for tabulation dominated the Chinese view of the structure of society. Ideally, this was formed around a well-defined social hierarchy in which everyone knew his place. A predominantly agricultural population was expected to remain content under an educated bureaucracy which looked for guidance to a humane and solicitous emperor.

The cultured man was one who recognised his place in the scheme of things and who lived out his life and made his contribution to the common good without violating the established world order. His conduct was regulated by an ingrained feeling for correct behaviour, which he knew instinctively without being told. It was firmly believed that man was by nature good and that a government based on virtue could win the hearts of men. These concepts form a substantial part of Chinese philosophical terminology.

The accepted norm was the principle of social righteousness, *yi*, to which people were expected to conform through correct ways of behaviour, *li*, and by maintaining good faith, *hsin*. The *chuntzu* or superior man was one who demonstrated his mastery of *li* by presenting people with examples of his benevolence, *jen*.

Although this code of conduct was applied more rigorously to the upper classes it pervaded all levels of Chinese society and dictated the pattern of the five major relationships of Confucianism: father and son, ruler and subject, husband and wife, elder and younger brother, and friend and friend.

Loyalty to the emperor

This emphasis on correct relationships greatly strengthened the family system and, through the family, the clan and the guild. Furthermore, by Han times it had been built up into a political creed. Confucianism, which made conformity a virtue, gave successive emperors the willing allegiance of their countless subjects as they pursued the imperial ideal.



Throughout imperial times, the role of the emperor and the state in this structure was not clearly defined. Theoretically, while the emperor was supreme he was also expected to conform to the accepted code of moral conduct. A ruler who acted in an arbitrary manner and destroyed the natural balance could commit the country to a period of calamity. In the popular mind, natural catastrophes such as flood or famine were often taken as portents of the failure of the ruler, who could only rightfully expect to enjoy the mandate of heaven if his actions remained in harmony with nature. In his writings the philosopher

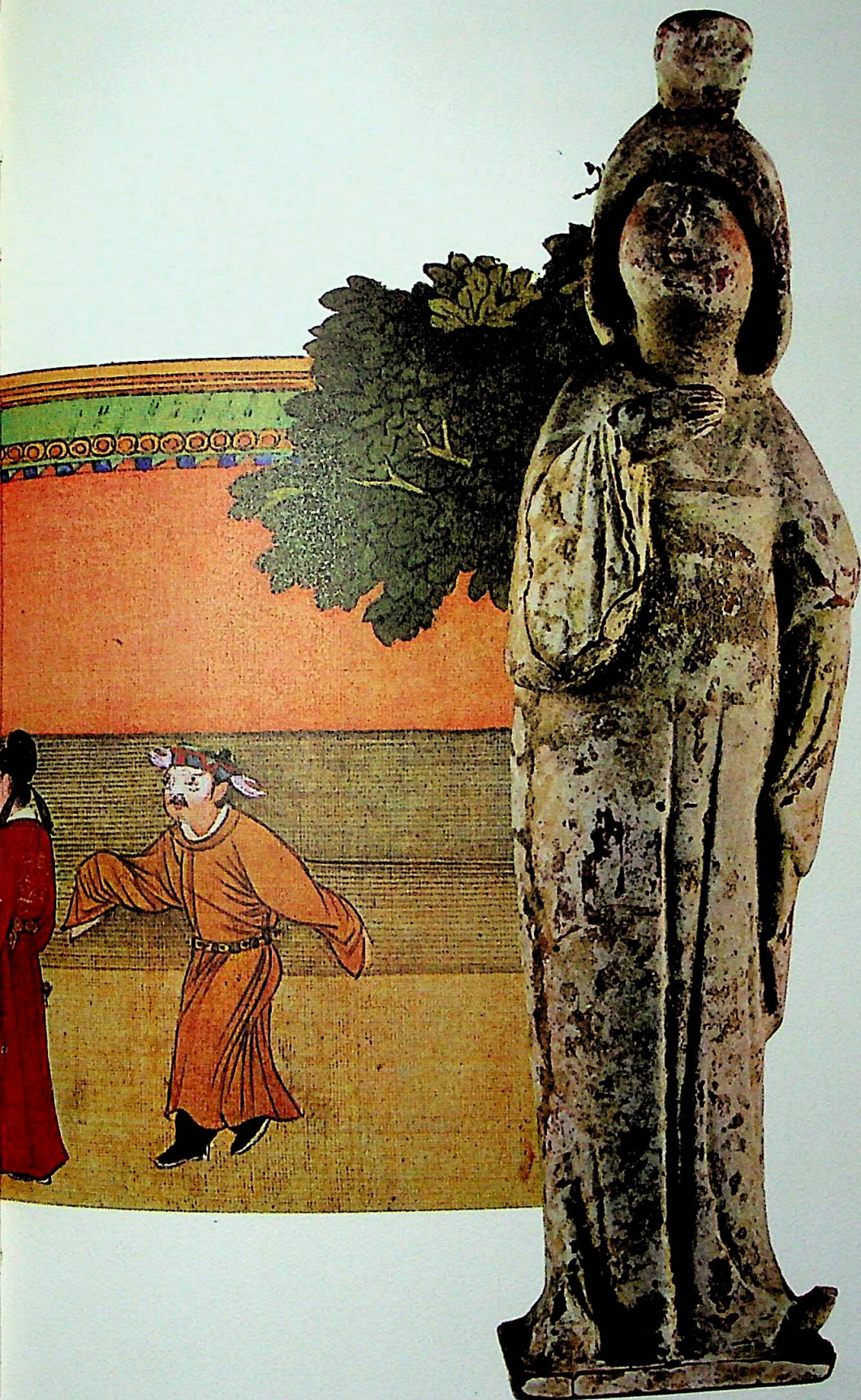
Mencius even implied that the people had the legal right to rebel if the natural balance was wilfully destroyed.

As the state extended its control it was not always ready to accept this restriction on its behaviour. Ch'in Shih Huang Ti's support of the legalists and his attempt at thought control, as seen in his burning of the books in 213 B.C., was an early example of the way in which the ruler sought to apply a different code of values. In time, the concept of *chung* or loyalty to one's superior was given greater prominence. In practice, as in the experience of the early Greeks, there was often a clash between different loyalties,

From the twelfth century, drama as an art form developed both in Hangchow and in Peking under the Chin. By the succeeding Yuan dynasty a wide variety of themes were represented on the stage, some of which were satirical in content.

Above: a group of players act the part of men of letters mocking the simplicity of the Mongol soldiers. Extract from the Life of the Emperors of China. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)

Right: statuette in terra cotta of a court lady of the Tang period. (Musée Cernuschi, Paris.)



world, Neo-Confucianism was born. Henceforth, the Chinese scholars who controlled the policies of the Confucian state enshrined their cultural achievement and looked back on an idealised past.

The ancient kingdoms of Southeast Asia

From early times southeast Asia lay at the crossroads of the maritime trade route between east and west. Several ancient kingdoms emerged in this area, where foreign influences joined with indigenous cultures to form societies which reflected the diverse ethnic origins of the various peoples.

One of the earliest of the states was Funan, which developed in the valley of the Mekong. It was apparently founded by an Indian merchant who married a Cambodian princess, thus establishing a Hindu kingdom in the East Indies. Funan is the Chinese form of the Khmer *phnom*, meaning 'mountain', a name which probably derived from the practice of the early rulers, who built their temples on high ground and called themselves 'the kings of the mountain'. The importance of Funan in this early period was that it provided a convenient landfall in the east for the numerous small trading vessels which made the journey across the Erythraean Sea, as the Indian Ocean was then known.

Southeast Asia and the West

From the first century A.D. there was a growing interest in the west in the maritime trade of southeast Asia. In western literature it figures as a golden land where precious metals were to be obtained. The Latin geographer Pomponius Mela, writing in AD 43 referred to the islands of Chryse and Argyre. Pliny in his *Natural History* wrote of the promontory of Chryse. A fuller account was then given by a Graeco-Egyptian sea captain in a remarkable work called the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*. In it the inhabitants of southeast Asia are described as men with short bodies, broad, flat faces and of a peaceful disposition.

Ptolemy thought of the place as a gold-producing island populated by cannibals with tails. The small vessels which engaged in this trade were forced to make the journey in stages. Funan, which stretched across the southeast Asian mainland to the Bay of Bengal, was the natural landfall for the trans-shipment of goods.

The kingdom of Champa

To the east of Funan lived the warrior Cham people who formed the kingdom of Champa in the second century A.D. The Chams established a religious centre near Hue, accepted Hinduism and Buddhism and adopted Indian customs.

However, from the beginning the political stability of Champa was menaced by the

leading to a tragic conflict of right against right.

These beliefs, first formulated at the time of the Han, were overshadowed during the succeeding centuries of foreign invasion and political change. Between the Han and the T'ang dynasties, there was a more ready response to the teachings of Taoism, with its greater appeal to the mystical side of the human spirit, and to Buddhism, with its

promise of personal salvation.

By the tenth century the ebb and flow of Chinese expansionism had come to an end. The Sung, menaced by hostile neighbours and thrown back on themselves, developed an awareness of the need to reaffirm and to preserve the essential elements of their own cultural traditions. Thus, at a time when Chinese civilisation had reached a level of maturity unparalleled elsewhere in the

growth of Chinese influence in the north. As early as the seventh century B.C. the feudal state of Ch'u displayed an interest in the southern tropical regions. By the third century B.C. the armies of the Ch'in Empire had penetrated southwards and had briefly occupied the Nam-Viet, the name by which the territories of Kwangtung, Kwangsi and northern Vietnam were then known.

The Ch'in sent a military official named Chao T'o to administer the area. He married

a Viet woman, introduced the Chinese language and declared the region independent after the fall of Ch'in, taking the title 'Martial King of Vietnam'. The Han rulers made several attempts to re-establish Chinese control over the area, but they were too preoccupied with the barbarian incursions in the north.

Over the succeeding centuries there were frequent clashes between the Chinese and the Chams. Eventually, in A.D. 679, the

powerful armies of the T'ang swept south and established the protectorate of Annam.

The rise of Chenla

By this time a new power had risen in the Mekong valley to subdue the ancient kingdom of Funan. This was the state of Chenla, whose people were the Khmers or Cambodians. After conquering Funan the Cambodians were weakened by internal dissention and were dominated by the piratical



Sailendra kings of Java. However, in the ninth century the Khmers were reunited under King Jayavarman II, who laid the foundations of the great Khmer Empire.

The most enduring achievement of King Jayavarman II and his successors was their extensive and costly building programme. Angkor, their capital, was filled with a profusion of edifices in wood, brick and stone, elaborately carved with Buddhist and Hindu motifs. Outstanding amongst these

was Angkor Wat, the sanctuary to Vishnu built by Suryavarman II (1113-50). This complex of buildings, whose ruins still remain, extended over a square mile and is thought to be the largest religious monument in the world.

Between the ninth and the thirteenth centuries the Khmer people maintained their supremacy on the southeast Asia mainland against the Chams, Laos, Burmese and Thais. Periodically the Chinese attempted to

extend their control from the north, and on three occasions during the thirteenth century the region was invaded by the Mongols of Kublai Khan.

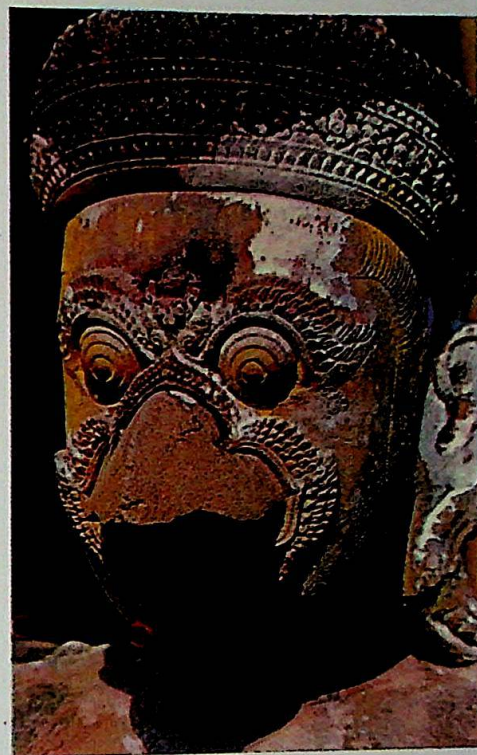
The island empires

Long before this time the main centre of political and economic activity had moved south, where the insular empires of Java, Sumatra and Borneo had grown in importance. Foremost among these was Srivijaya,



Angkor is the most remarkable testimony of the cultural contribution of India to Southeast Asia.

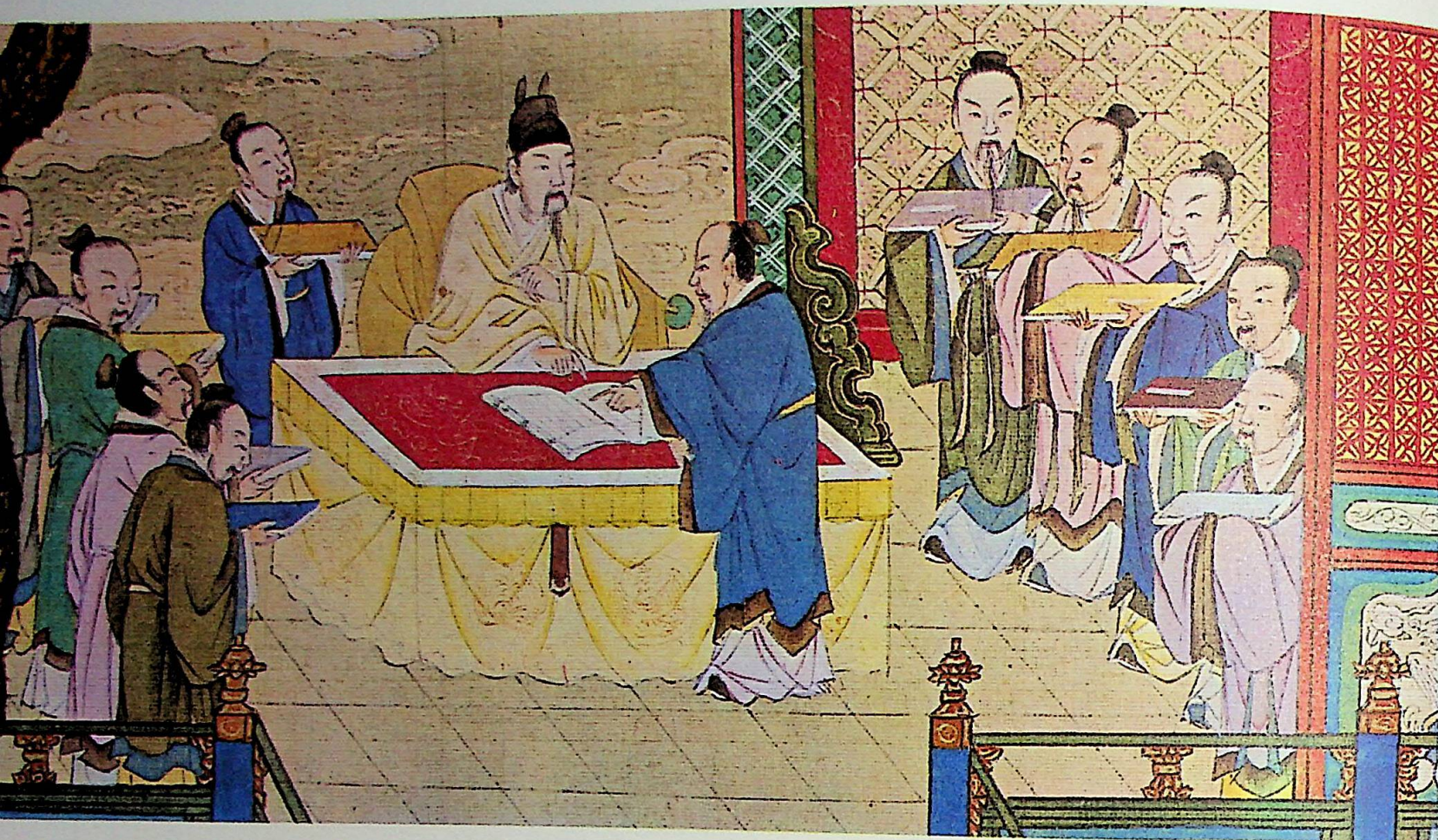
Left: the Khmer sovereigns built this group of temples starting in the tenth century, and Brahman and Buddhist influences mingled with local traditions, placing statues of Vishnu or Shiva side by side with the bodhisattvas.



Above: a fabulous bird, the guardian of the temples of Banteai-Srei.

Right: a Cambodian hut sheltering fishermen on Lake Tul-Sap.





which developed from Indian trading settlements in southern Sumatra. After the fourth and fifth centuries, as Funan began to decline, the maritime trade from India moved past Sumatra around the tip of the Malay peninsula, leading to a natural development of the trading settlements scattered along these coasts.

In the fifth century the Chinese pilgrim, Fa-hsien, who had travelled to India by the overland silk route, returned this way by sea. At one stage of his journey (which lasted five months) he was forced to wait at the trading settlement of Yeh-o'O-ti on the northern coast of Borneo for the monsoon winds which would carry him to Canton. He noted then with disapproval that Brahmanism was flourishing in the region while the Buddhist faith was in decline.

By the end of the seventh century the position of Buddhism had greatly improved in southeast Asia. The Chinese monk, I-ching, who travelled to India by the maritime route, stayed for a number of years in Srivijaya where he translated Sanskrit scriptures and contributed to the spread of Mahayana Buddhism.

Throughout the eighth and ninth centuries Srivijaya grew in strength. The capital Palembang became a regular port of call for the ships which carried the products

The oldest printed book in the world, a Buddhist text, the 'Sutra of the Diamond' dates from A.D. 868. It was reproduced from characters engraved on wood.

Above: scholars explain classical texts to an emperor. Extract from The Life of the Emperors of China. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)



from east Africa, Arabia, Persia and the Coromandel coast of India. As its importance grew it attracted trade from the area of the Straits of Malacca and from China. In fact, in time the vigorous activity of the Persian and Arab traders was extended up the coastline to Canton, which in T'ang times assumed a cosmopolitan character. After 850 A.D. Srivijaya united with the Sailendras kingdom of Java and became the dominant power in southeast Asia. By the

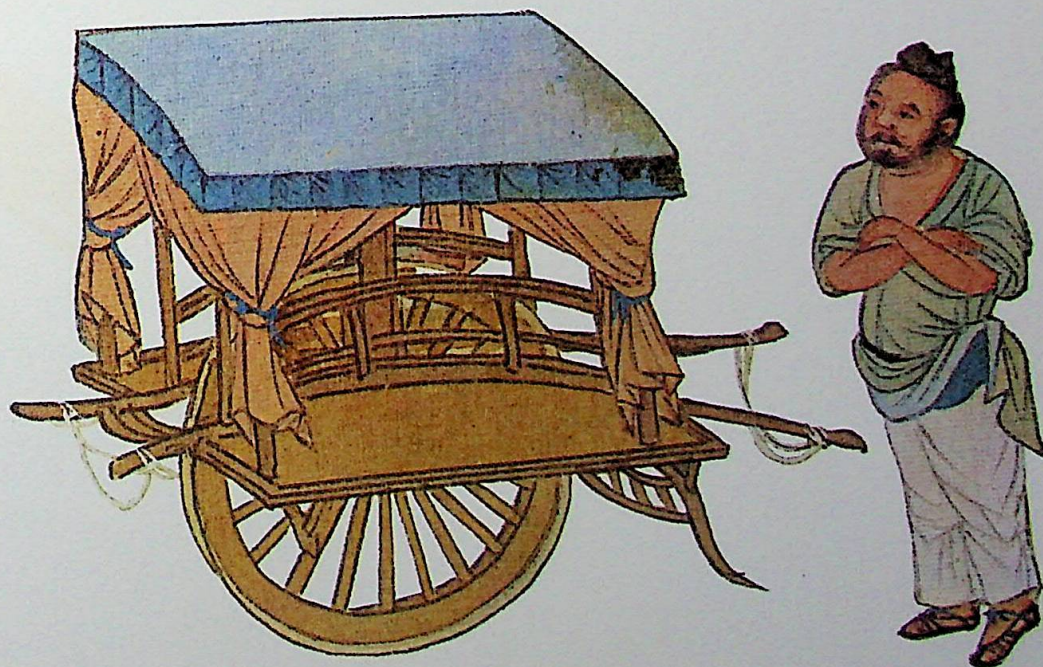
twelfth century its influence reached as far as Formosa in the north.

However, from the thirteenth century Srivijaya began to decline. An increasing demand for the natural products of the area (gold, tin, ivory, ebony, camphorwood), and, above all, the spices so invaluable to the medieval world (pepper, nutmeg and cloves) encouraged the growth of the states where these products were to be found. In turn, the Java states of Kediri, Singosari,



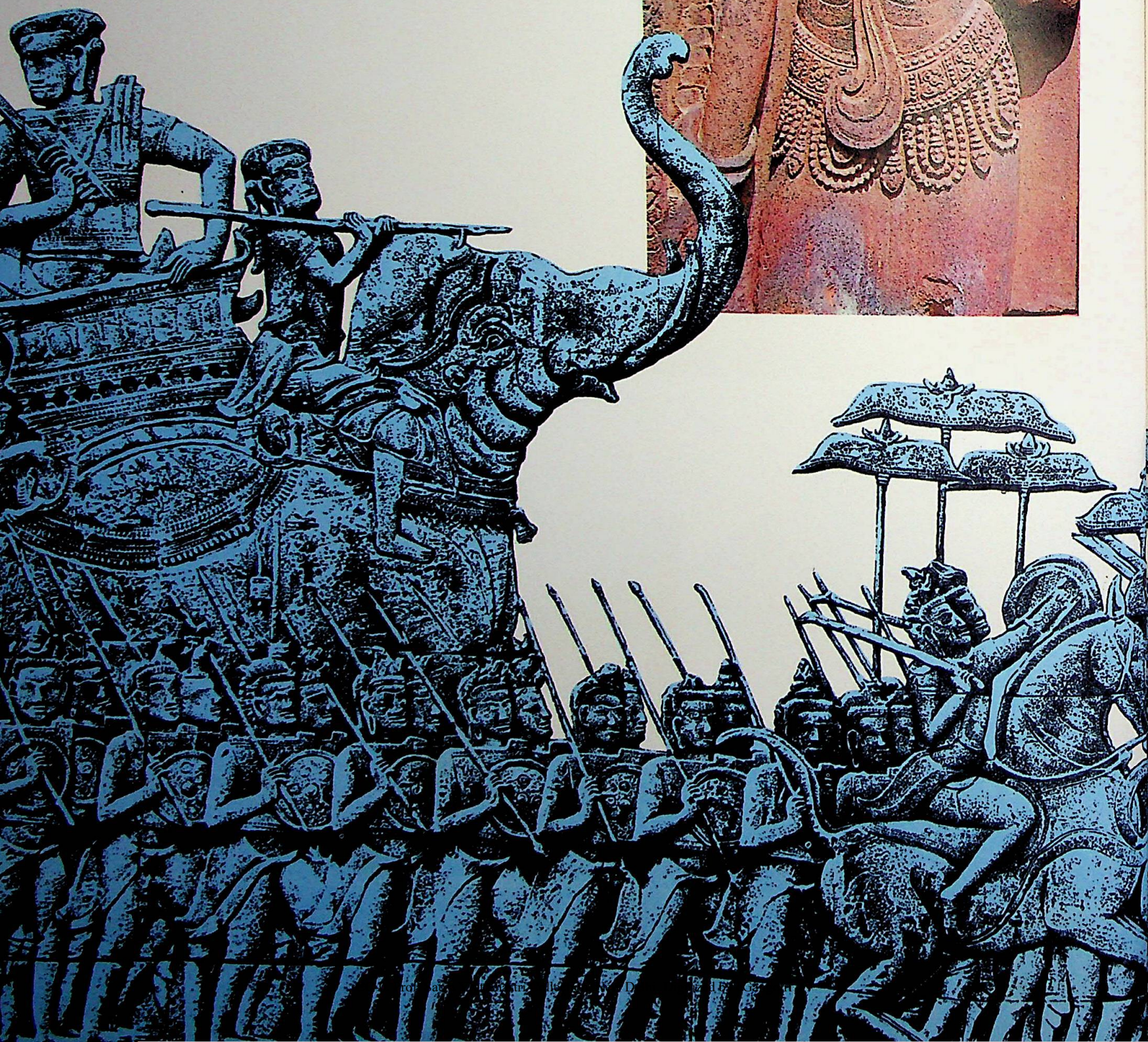
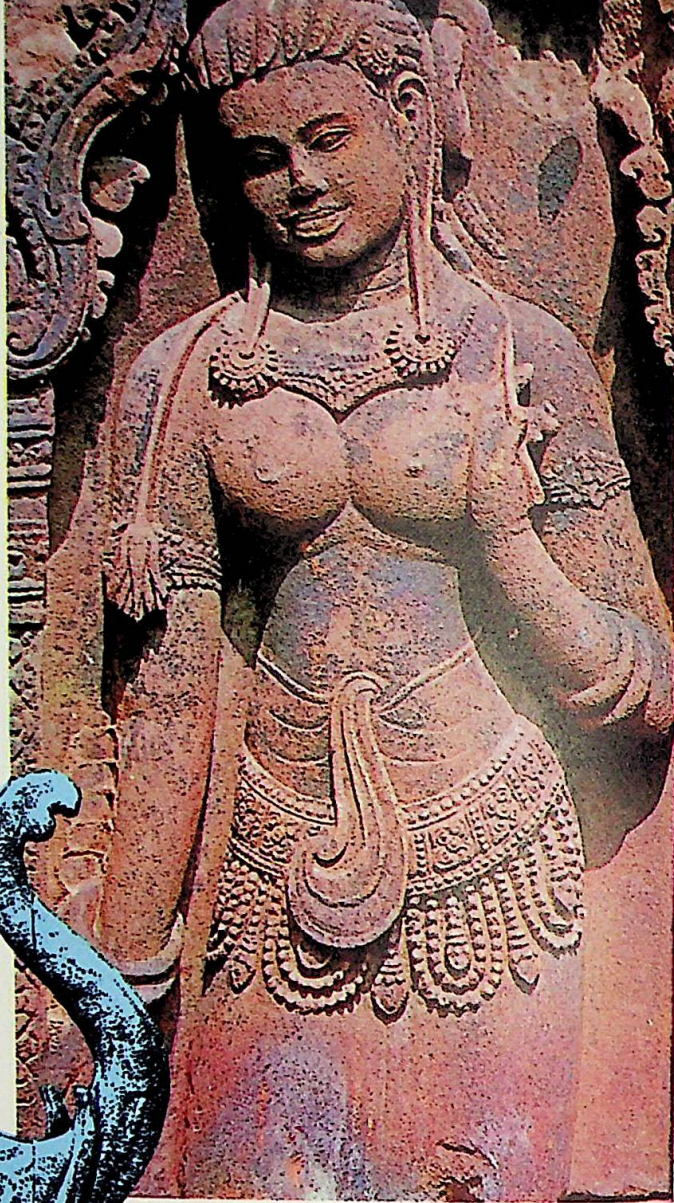
The spread of printing increased the importance of scholars. The Sung era was one of the greatest periods of intellectual and artistic achievement in Chinese history: Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism enjoyed their most fruitful development. Left: Kao-Tsung, seen sleeping at his desk, was an aesthetic and cultured emperor, very different from his predecessors, the uncouth emperors of the T'sin dynasty who, exasperated by the scholars, had them thrown into ditches while their books were burnt (above). Extracts from *The Life of the Emperors of China*. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)

A common means of transport for the ordinary people was the wheelbarrow, the occupants sitting back to back on either side of the wheel. Sometimes a sail was used to help it along. From *The Life of the Emperors of China*. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)



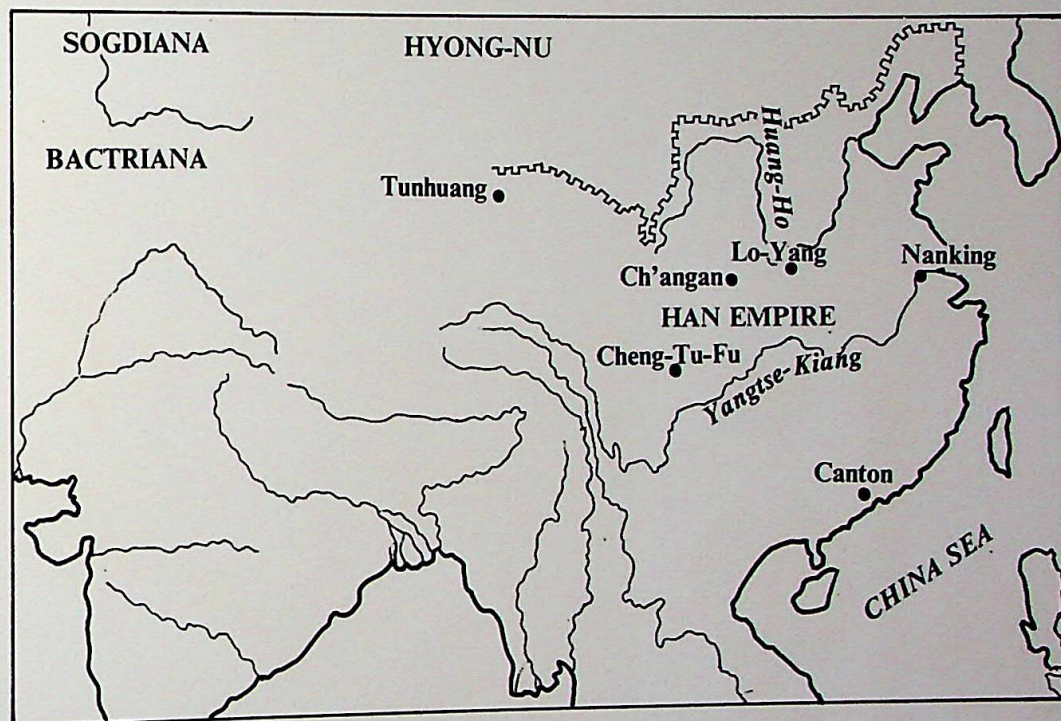
Malayu and Majapahit began to dominate the politics of the area and to absorb the all-important spice trade.

For over a century Majapahit, the greatest and also the last of these Hindu-Javanese states, claimed domination over the islands as well as the mainland as far north as Annam. The spread of Islam eastwards in the fourteenth century then brought about the commercial supremacy of the Muslim centre of Malacca, which was itself eclipsed a century later when the Portuguese arrived to usher in a new age.



Jayavarman VII was the greatest Khmer ruler of the last part of the twelfth century. He completed the building of Angkor, notably the Bayon, whose central sanctuary is decorated with bas-reliefs exalting the founder-king, and with representations of the divinities who protected him.

Below: a bas-relief from Angkor Wat showing Khmer soldiers on the march. Elephants were frequently used in warfare. Left: a statue of Devata.



China under the Han dynasty. Chinese expansion into central Asia led to increasing contacts with other countries and greatly facilitated the spread of Buddhism from India into China. The map also shows the Great Wall built by the Chi'in, the predecessors of the Han. Stretching for 1,500 miles across northern China, it was a remarkable achievement.

بزرگ زرین بزدن جمعیت کرده طوی بزرگ کرده



The coming of the Mongols

Men with no noses who worship the wind; Genghis Khan carves out a vast kingdom; travellers' tales of the wonders of the East.

From time to time during the Middle Ages, Europeans were reminded how small their corner of the world was. Rumours would come out of the east of a land which stretched to the very edge of the earth. It was inhabited by centaurs—restless clans of herdsmen who lived on their horses. They shifted their black hide tents hundreds of miles in their annual quest for pastures. The men were squat and slit-eyed and they drank the sour milk of mares.

Every few centuries there was an upheaval. The clans united into hordes and sought the softer life of Mesopotamia or of northern China. Thus came the Seljuk Turks, mounted archers, within sight of Constantinople in the eleventh century: 'they worship the wind and live in the wilderness . . . they have no noses.'

The final and most devastating wave of conquerors from central Asia were the Mongols. Their empire was so vast, so sudden and so strange that it fitted into no known category. But twice it saved Byzantium by all but destroying its Turkish enemies in Anatolia—in 1243 by defeating the Seljuks at Köse Dag and in 1402 by triumphantly carrying off the Ottoman sultan Bayezid from the battlefield of Ankara.

For Western Christians the Mongols gave hope of an ally to break the Muslim encirclement of the crusader state of Jerusalem. Tales of Nestorian Christians among the Mongol Khans inspired one of the most intriguing and persistent of western beliefs—that the Mongols were led by none other than Prester John, the legendary Christian king of some distant eastern country.

The Mongol homeland lies to the northwest of the Great Wall of China. To the west it is bounded by the High Altai moun-

tains, to the south by the Gobi desert and to the north by Lake Baikal. Karakorum, the medieval capital, stood 200 miles west of modern Ulan Bator.

Temujin

The *Secret History of the Mongols* (in fact a collection of clan legends) describes how in about 1167 a Mongol tribe defeated the neighbouring Tartars. A Mongol leader called Yesugei captured a Tartar named Temujin-uge.

'At that time Yesugei's wife, Ho'elun, was with child and beside the Onan river under the Deli'un-boldakh mountain she bore Temujin. When he was born, he was grasping a clot of blood in his right hand, in the shape of a knuckle-bone playing piece. It was because he was born at the time his father captured Temujin-uge that he was given the name Temujin.'

When Temujin was eight, his father took him to find a wife. He met Dei-sechen who said:

'This son of yours has bright eyes and a light in his face. Last night I dreamt that a falcon with the sun and the moon in its two claws flew to me and perched on my hand. Friend Yesugei, it is clear that your coming today with this child is the answer to my dreams. I have a daughter at home who is very young. Come with me and have a look at her.'

The girl's name was Borte, and she was a year older than Temujin, who thought her very beautiful but was scared by Dei-sechen's boisterous dogs. Yesugei left his spare horse as a bride price.

Later Borte was kidnapped by the Merkits. Temujin, now a man, enlisted the Kereits to win her back. He triumphed in 1195, when he had defeated or gained the alliance of most of the wandering peoples of the High Altai.

'Altan, Khuchar, Sacha-beki and all of them, after consulting together, said to Temujin, "We appoint you as our khan. If you be our khan, we will go as vanguard against the multitude of your enemies. All the beautiful girls that we capture and all the fine horses, we will give to you. When

hunting is afoot we will give you the wild beasts that we catch."'

Such was the oath they made to serve him. They named him Genghis, or 'ocean'.

From Mongol legend in the *Secret History* we pass to Genghis Khan's later Persian biographer, Juvaini, whose *History of the World-Conqueror* is one of the great chronicles of the Middle Ages.

'The home of the Mongols is an immense valley, whose area is a journey of seven or eight months both in length and breadth. Before the appearance of Genghis Khan they had no chief or ruler. Each tribe lived separately and there was constant fighting between them. Some of them regarded robbery and violence, immorality and debauchery as deeds of manliness and excellence. Their clothing was of the skins of dogs and mice and their food was the flesh of those animals. Their wine was mare's milk.

The sign of a great emir amongst them was that his stirrups were of iron; from which one can form a picture of their other luxuries. And they continued in this indigence, privation and misfortune until the banner of Genghis Khan's fortune was raised and they issued forth from the straits of hardship into the amplitude of well-being, from a prison into a garden, from the desert of poverty into a palace of delight.'

Such was the view of the scholarly Juvaini, representative of a Persian civilisation which the Mongols first conquered and then adapted when, in 1258, they sacked Baghdad. On this occasion they smothered the last Abbasid caliph for fear of shedding royal blood.

Genghis Khan's conquests were formidable. From the Year of the Cock (1201) to the Year of the Tiger (1206) he made himself master of Mongolia and set his nine-tailed white banner on the Onan river. Now he was great khan.

He then turned east and the struggle for China began. By 1213 the Mongols had stormed the Great Wall and were within the wide plain which stretches from Peking to the Yellow river. Two years later Peking fell.

Genghis Khan turned west. Bokhara, Samarkand, Nishapur and Herat were sacked and the Kwarazmian khanate extinguished. By 1222 Genghis' lieutenants had

Left: Genghis Khan united the Mongol tribes of the High Altai to conquer the world. Here the great khan is shown receiving a vassal ruler. Note the characteristic form of the Mongol goatskin tent, the yurt.

reached the shores of the Black Sea. Twenty years later the Golden Horde was to rule Russia and threaten Hungary.

Genghis Khan returned to Karakorum in 1224. He died on 18 August 1227, aged barely sixty. The funeral cortege visited the tents of each of his wives in turn. Mongol chieftains hastened from all corners of the new empire; some were three months on the way. Genghis Khan is buried in the Kentei mountains where he had hunted. The place became taboo and the forest was allowed to cover the spot, which is now forgotten.

The Golden Horde

The extent of Genghis Khan's conquests must be measured in degrees of latitude: about ninety-five per cent of the earth's surface from the Black to the Yellow seas. How was it done? The Mongols were always a minority among their conquered peoples. The central army was led by ninety-five commanders of a thousand Mongols proper, but its masses were drawn from tributaries. The army was fast-moving with a high proportion of cavalry. The Mongols shot from the saddle.

The Horde became a byword for blood-thirstiness. This reputation is not altogether justified. In part it lies in the exuberant propaganda of the Mongols' own subject chroniclers. Their chief difficulty lay in taking walled towns, particularly on the silk road and in northern China, where they would advance behind ranks of hostages.

In sacking the desert oases the Mongols displayed all the nomad mistrust of merchant society, but also adopted the techniques of previous local wars between the trading stations themselves. In order to suppress the trade of a rival town, its inhabitants

as well as its defences had to be extinguished. So towering mounds of the skulls of Mongol victims are still pointed out in Persia and Afghanistan, symbols of the Mongols' obsessive fear of the urban prosperity of the subjects who outnumbered them and mistrust of the decaying Abbasid and Chinese cultures which they overtook.

The Mongol Empire

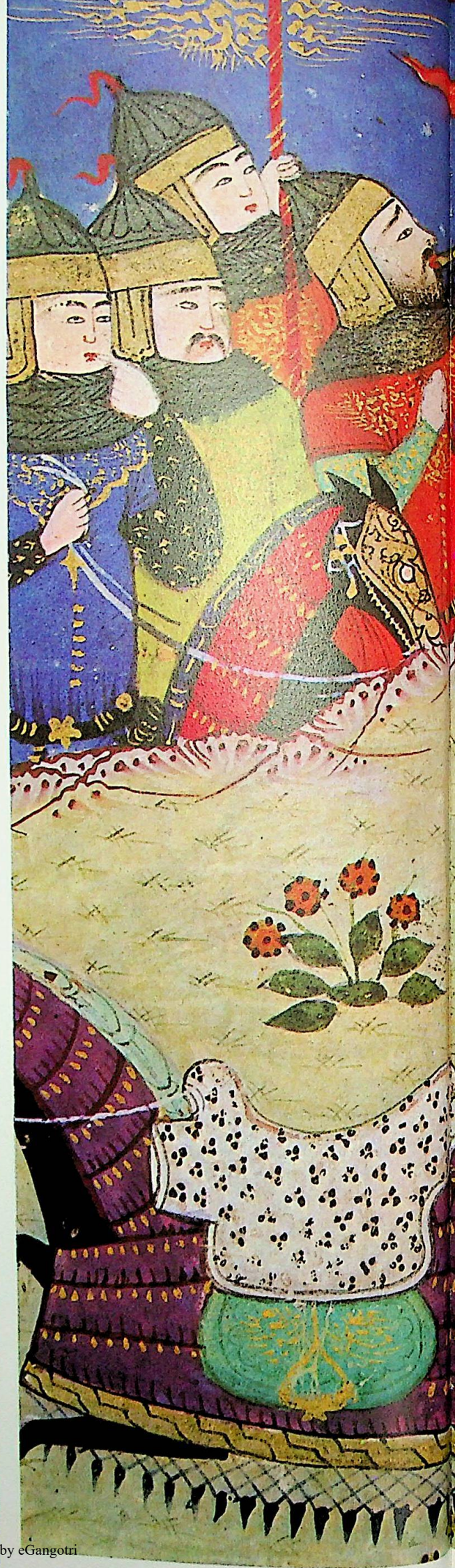
The cohesion of the Mongol Empire lay in its long adherence to its early tribal structure. Genghis Khan codified Mongol clan law in the *yasa*, which remained the basis of the Mongol moral and civil code until the twentieth century. The early origins of the Mongols in the High Altai were never forgotten. Here at Karakorum the tribes would assemble in a *qiriltay* when a campaign was being prepared or a new great khan had to be elected and acclaimed.

The process of assembly was necessarily protracted, but communications within the empire were remarkably good. The Tartar relay post could take a message to Tabriz to Peking in two-and-a-half to three months, while merchant caravans took a year or so if all went well (which was rare). Officials carried a passport in the form of a small gold tablet, or *paiza*, with which they commandeered horses at staging posts.

When the Mongols captured Baghdad in 1258, they reopened the through trade route to the Far East. Caravans could make their way from Tana, Trebizond and Damascus to China. The heyday of the route ended in the fifteenth century when a number of factors put an end to the old overland route. These included the death of Timur in 1406, the fall of Constantinople and the Italian Crimean trading stations in 1453 and 1475, the Italian economic depression and the Portuguese penetration of the Indian Ocean from the Cape of Good Hope at the end of the century.

Italian merchants were not slow to follow up the opportunities offered by the Mongol Empire as a vast free-trade area (although local tolls could still be heavy) in the years after 1258. Pegolotti compiled a handbook for merchants trading with the east in the 1340s, which gives an indication of the

Their Persian subjects loved to depict Mongol victories (right) and atrocities (below), where victims of Genghis Khan are scourged and then boiled alive in cauldrons. Persian miniatures. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)





nature of the goods which entered Europe from the Mongol Empire.

Luxury goods (always the last to stop coming from the east in any political and economic crisis) predominated. The medieval diet in Europe also required strong spices, to disguise bad meat, and powerful purgatives.

The overland route began at Tana, on the Don, or at Trebizond, Smyrna and Damascus. From the Caucasus and southern Russia came amber, hides, honey and slaves (who were in increasing demand in Italian households after the Black Death precipitated a domestic servant crisis in the late fourteenth century). At Tabriz damask, brocades, quicksilver, mastic, spikenard, lign-aloes, camphor and ceremonial parasols could be obtained.

The Samarkand market offered rhubarb and silk, and the best silk, and galangal, came from Peking. The Tibetan rhubarb route was probably more important at this stage than the famous silk road. Very little Chinese silk was in fact imported to the West (where there had been excellent silk factories at Constantinople and in Sicily for centuries). Powdered rhubarb was the most drastic purgative known in late medieval Italy and figures among the most expensive items in household accounts.

The more important land route led down

from Tabriz to the Persian Gulf and Ormuz. Here musk, borax, camel hair, galbanum, scammony, hyssop, and gum arabic could be obtained. Somalia was the source for gold, frankincense and myrrh. Then dhows would bring goods on the monsoons from east Africa and India.

India produced indigo, wormwood, ginger, sugar, paper, cotton, carpets, amber and saffron. Ceylon sent zedoary, pearls and coral. Thence most ships sailed to the East Indies, source of the most important spice of all, pepper. From the East Indies came also brazilwood, cubebs, dragon's blood, cinnabar, cinnamon, mace, cardamon, nutmeg, asafoetida and cloves.

Most of these spices and drugs are rarely met with today, but they played an important part in medieval cooking and medicine. Under the Mongol Empire they came to western markets and some Italian merchants, such as the Polo brothers and young Marco, traversed the empire to the sources of their trade.

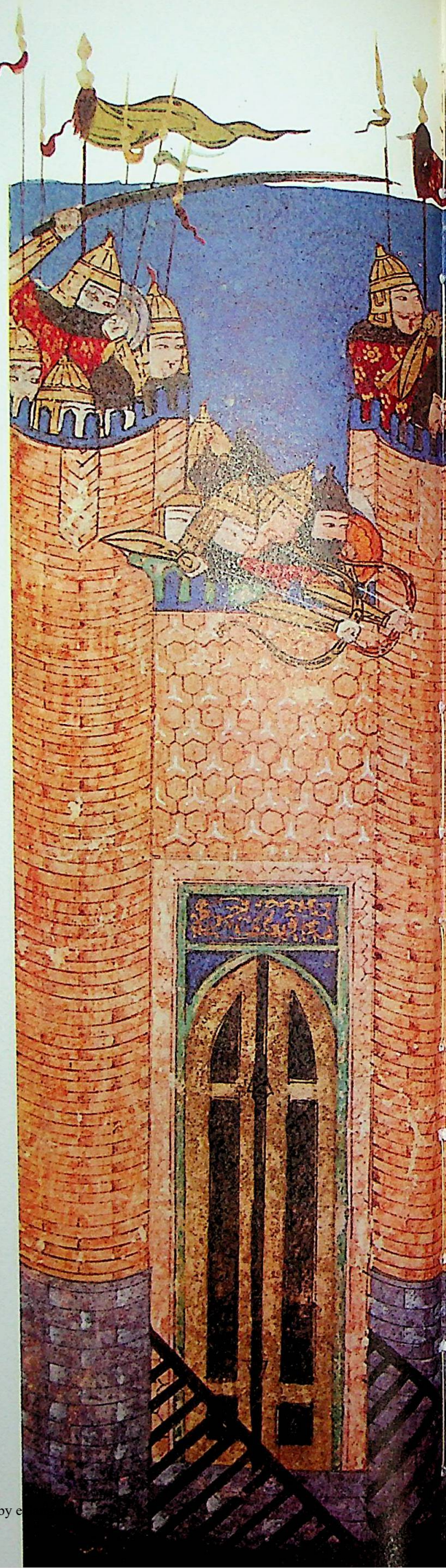
Visitors from the West

The Polos were far from being the only westerners who reached the Mongol courts at Saray, Murghan, Karakorum and Peking. The West first became aware of the Mongols in 1238 when the Assassins of Syria implored Henry III of England to save Islam from the new enemies of civilisation and when there was a glut of herrings at Yarmouth because their German buyers had stayed at home for fear of the Mongols.

In 1245 Pope Innocent IV decided to find out about the strange new Mongol power. Over the next century barefoot Franciscans regularly made their way to China. On 22 July, 1246, John of Piano Carpini witnessed the enthronement of Guyuk as great khan, near Karakorum.

'On a pleasant plain near a river among the mountains a tent had been set up. This tent was supported by columns covered with gold plates and fastened to other wooden beams with nails of gold, and the roof above and the sides on the interior were of brocade. A vast crowd assembled . . . and placed Guyuk on the imperial throne, and the chiefs knelt before him and after them all the people, with the exception of us who were not subject to them. Then they started

Left: Ogodai became great khan after Genghis. He is depicted enthroned on the left. By this time the great khan was already losing control of his subordinates. Centre: Hulagu, first ilkhan of Persia, conquered the cities of that country. Here his horsemen are shown besieging a town. Opposite: Hulagu, with fans and state parasol, sets out on an expedition. Persian miniatures. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)



drinking and, as is their custom, they drank without stopping till evening.'

Guyuk was shocked by Pope Innocent's suggestion that he be baptised.

'How do you know that the words which you speak are with God's sanction? From the rising of the sun to its setting, all lands have been made subject to me. Who can do this against the will of God?'

He ordered the pope to submit to him also and concluded ominously:

'If you do not observe God's command, and if you ignore my command, I shall know you as my enemy. Likewise I shall make you understand. If you do otherwise, God knows what I know.'

It seemed impossible to communicate with such people. Perhaps they were not talking of the same god. Geographically the great khan was encamped two years' journey away; mentally he was even more distant. In the next half century the two sides edged towards each other like people in the dark.

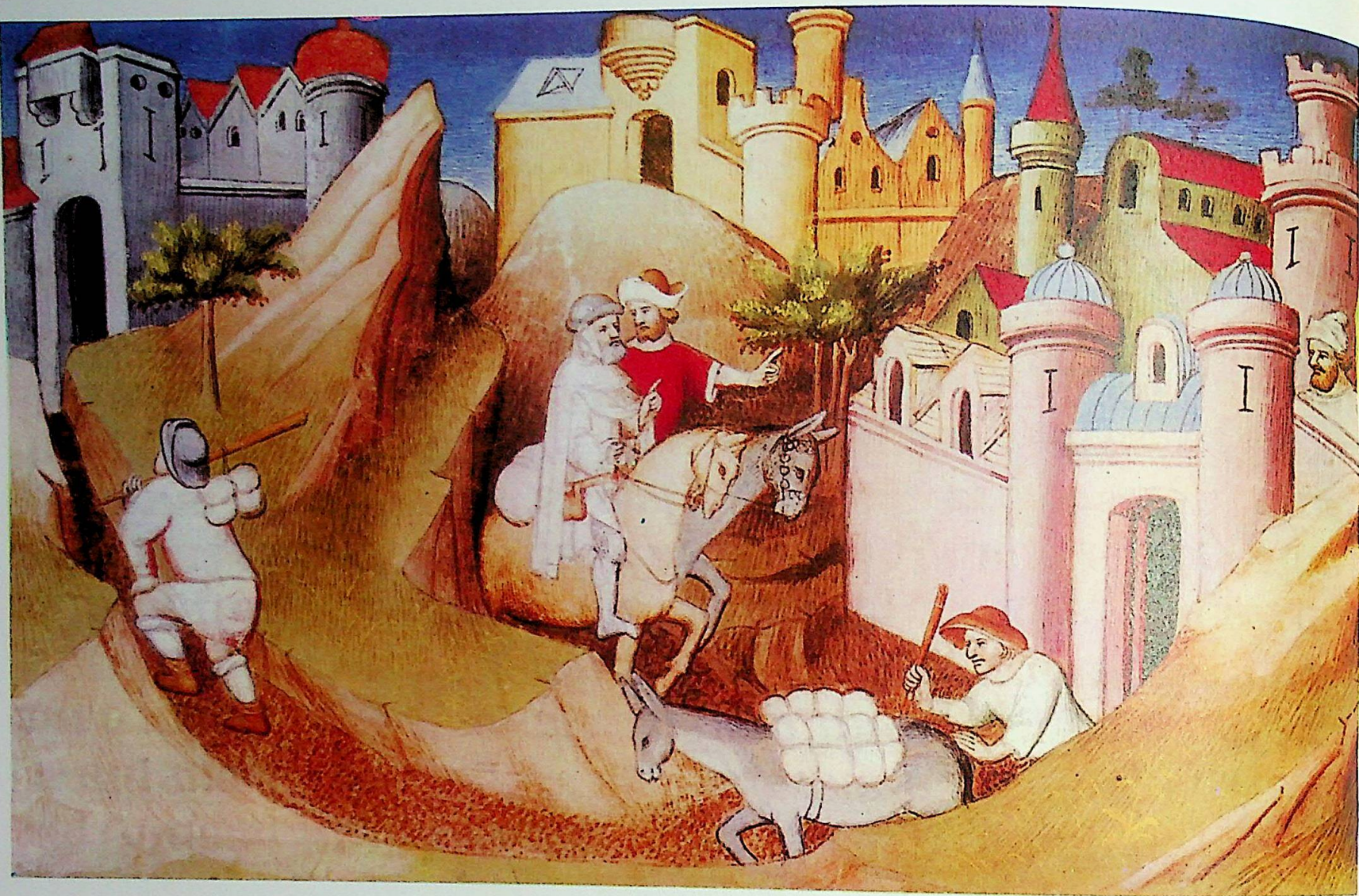
There was so little information. Mande-

ville, the most popular late medieval arm chair traveller, peopled the improbable lands beyond Christendom with headless Ceylonese giants and drunken Ethiopian monsters (who lay stupefied on their backs, each in the shade of his single huge foot).

After 1258 Italian merchants had more reliable information about the Mongols, but men like Polo were hardly believed unless they confirmed tales of pearls the size of ostrich eggs or of the Catholic piety of Prester John.

The papacy fancied that it could evangelise the Mongol Empire—and indeed in 1307 John of Monte Corvino became first archbishop of Peking. Western kings such as Edward I of England or St Louis of France toyed with the idea of a Mongol alliance to save the crusader outposts in the Holy Land. The great khans thought the European emissaries were simply vassals bringing inadequate tribute, but forgave them their eccentricities. The ilkhans of Persia had a more realistic view of the situation, but firm proposals were rare. It is in one of these encounters between east and west that we have the account of the most remarkable ambassador-traveller of the time, a Nestorian monk called Rabban Sauma.



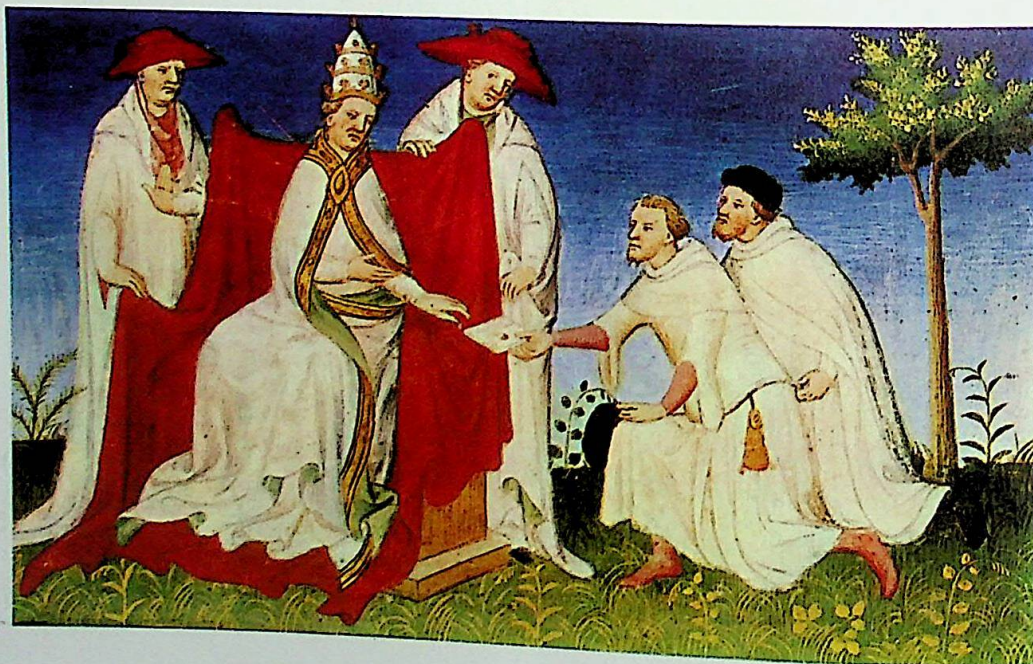


The travels of Rabban Sauma

Rabban Sauma was born near Peking about 1225. He became a hermit in 1278 but was persuaded by a disciple to make the immense pilgrimage to Jerusalem. They set off with the approval of Kublai, the great khan. During their journey the pilgrims found that since the death of Genghis Khan, fifty years before, the Mongol Empire had become a loose confederation of principalities held by members of the imperial family, which shared the same cultural and administrative traditions.

The khans of the Golden Horde ruled Russia from Saray, demanding tribute from the local princes (thereby strengthening the position of the Russian princes who were finally enabled to shake off the Mongol yoke in the fifteenth century). In Persia the Mongol Ilkhans erected a semi-independent state. The centre of the empire had shifted from Karakorum to Kublai's stately pleasure domes in northern China.

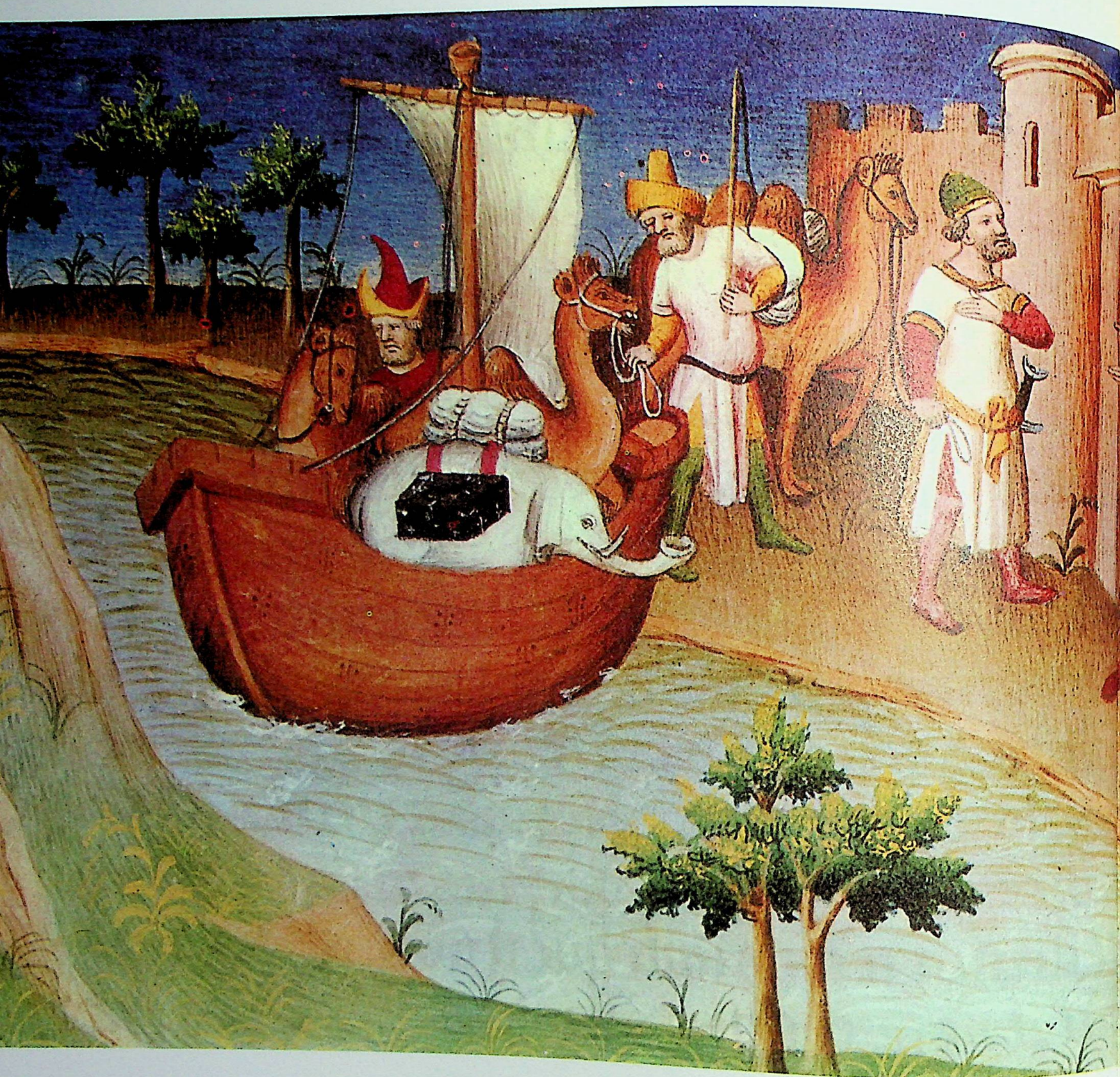
The remoteness of the great khan clearly contributed to the remarkable lack of friction between the great and lesser khans, although every decade or so the clans continued to meet in *qiriltays* where the heroic past of Genghis Khan could be relived in





In the late thirteenth century a number of Europeans made their way to China. The most famous was Marco Polo, whose account was illustrated by the scenes shown on these pages. His father and uncle made their first expedition to Kublai Khan's China in 1260-6. They are shown (top left) entering Peking. The Polos returned to take a message from Pope Gregory X back to Kublai (left), and set off from Venice with the young Marco in 1271. Marco did not return to Venice until 1295. Miniatures. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)

The Mongol Empire at the time of the travels of Marco Polo. In the space of a few years the Mongol chieftain, Temujin, who later took the title Genghis Khan or 'Lord of the Earth' forged an empire which stretched from Persia to Korea. His grandson, Kublai Khan, completed the conquest of China. By the end of the fourteenth century the Mongol Empire was in decline.

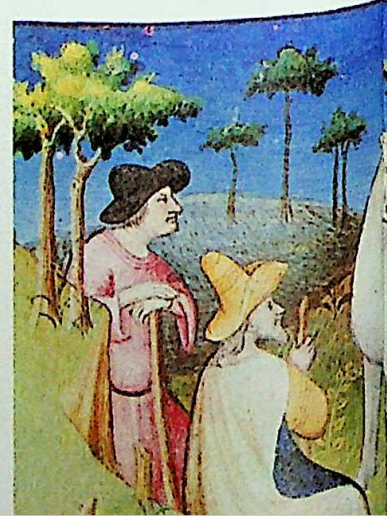


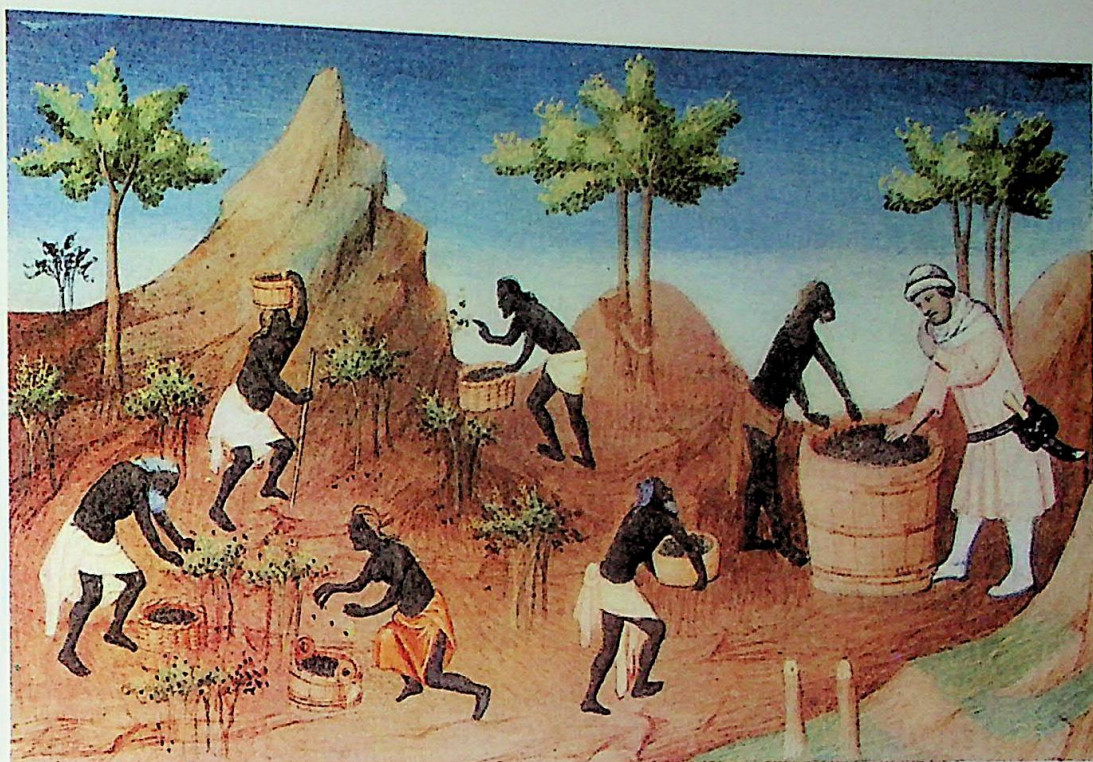
splendid displays of horsemanship and massive drinking bouts. There were also a number of tributaries, native rulers who retained their thrones under Mongol protection on the fringes of the empire. They recognised Mongol suzerainty, supplied military contingents and paid annual tributes.

Local wars prevented Rabban Sauma from returning to Peking or visiting the Holy Land after he had reached Persia.

Instead his disciple, Mar Yaballaha, was elected Nestorian patriarch and Rabban Sauma was sent by the Persian ilkhun, Arghun, as his ambassador to the west. To choose a Christian for this task was a shrewd move, but the Mongols were eclectic in religion, as in other things. Arghun's mother was a Christian, his own sympathies were for Buddhism (made fashionable at Kublai's court) and his vizier was a Jew.

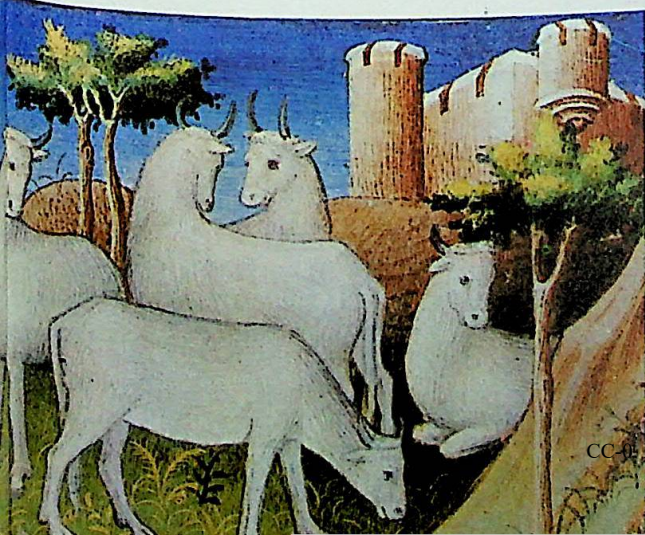
Rabban Sauma's private interests were in





Marco Polo's Book of Wonders was illustrated with scenes of Indian traders who brought camels and elephants to Hormuz, at the mouth of the Persian Gulf (left), and white buffaloes from Persia. Miniatures. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)

During his return voyage Marco Polo saw evidence of the importance of spices in the economy of Southern and Southeast Asia. Above: gathering pepper in south India. Miniature. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)



seeing and securing as many Christian relics as possible. Constantinople showed him the most potent relics in Christendom. He observed Stromboli in eruption, met the infamous Charles of Anjou, and was delighted by the under-graduates at Paris University. In October 1287 Rabban Sauma met the only Christian king who had in fact fought briefly in alliance with the Mongols in the Holy Land—Edward I of England. Completely unaware who his guest was, Edward took communion from a heretic.

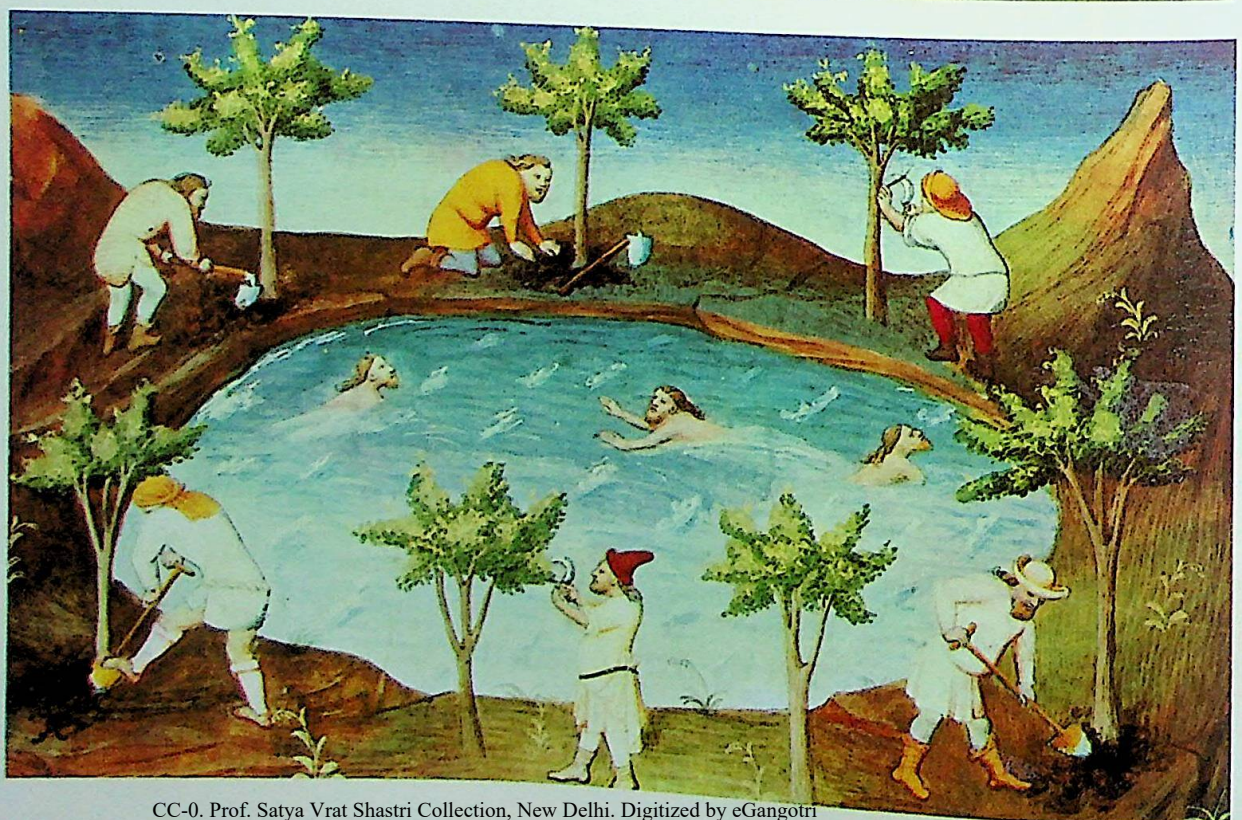
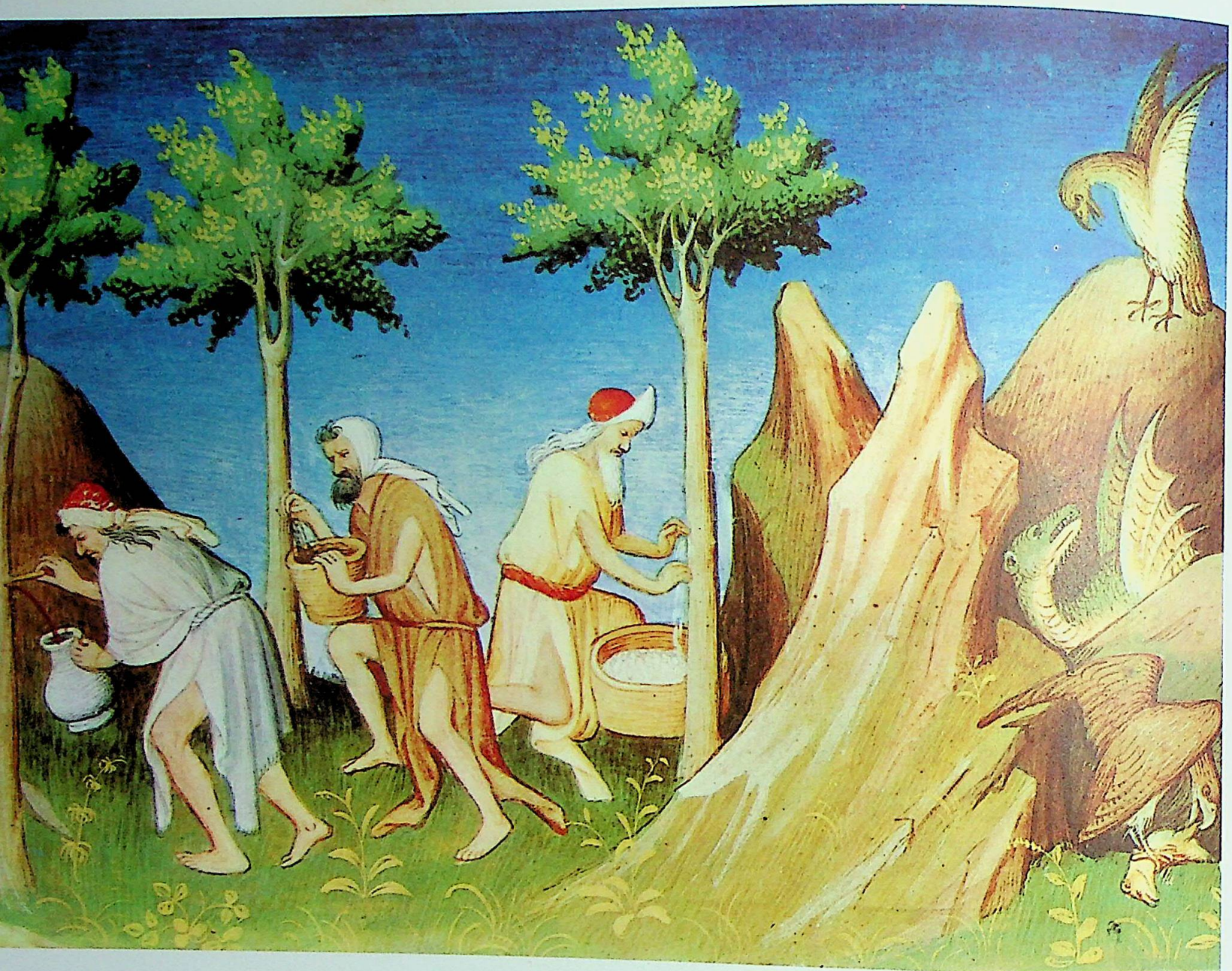
One can only wonder what the English king made of the elderly Uighar ascetic, called from his cave by the Huang-ho river to bring the first tales of Kublai Khan's China to Europe. Rabban Sauma thought little of Edward's relics but found in him the most sympathetic response to the proposal of an alliance against the Saracens.

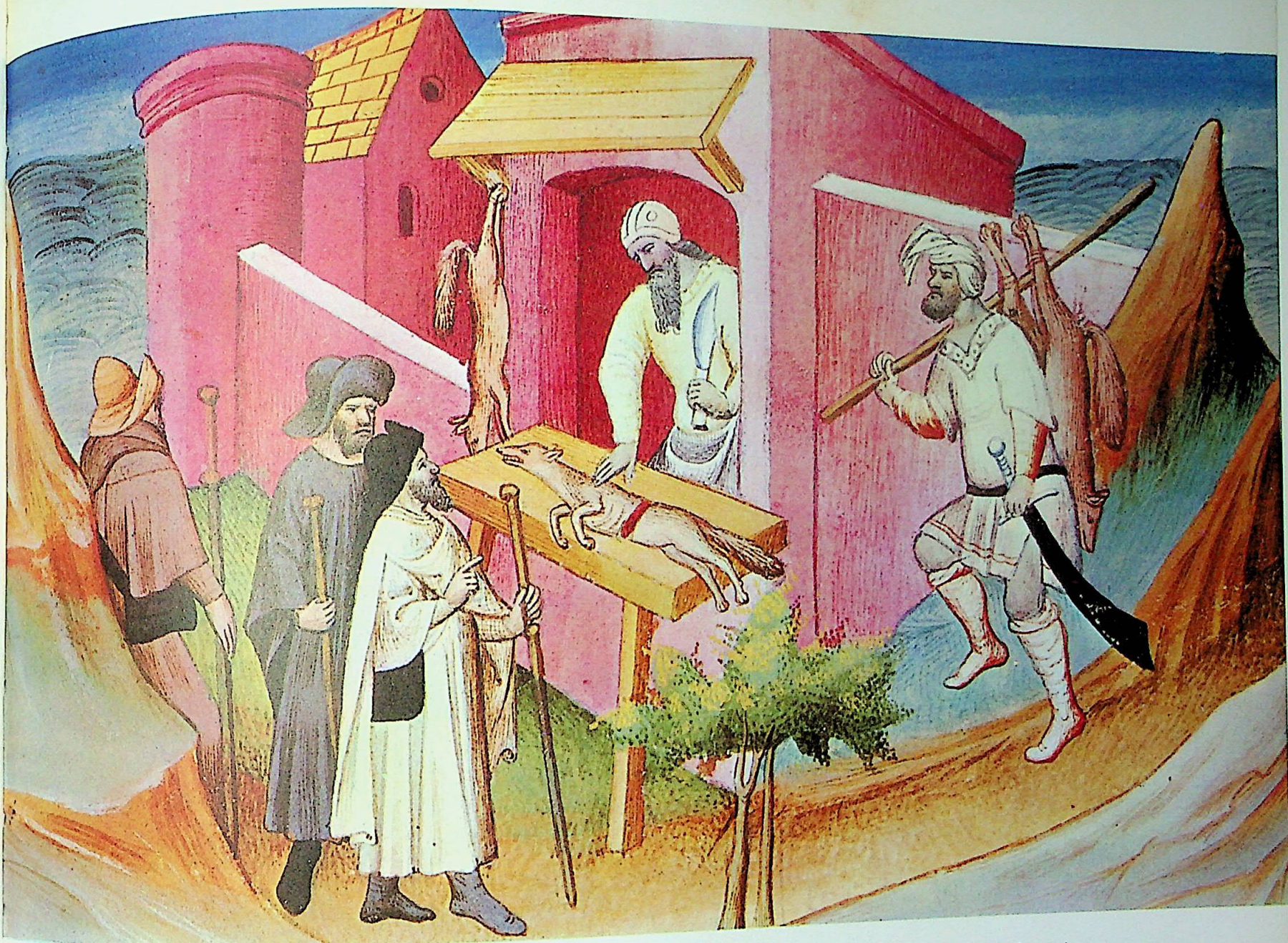
Edward sent English envoys in return to the ilkhan. Their daily accounts may still be

consulted in the Public Record Office in London. They include shopping lists for items from butter to parasols, painstakingly noted in pence of England, bezants of Byzantium, aspers of Trebizond and dirhams of Persia.

Unfortunately, Acre, the last crusader foothold in the Holy Land, had fallen before the expedition reached Mongol territory in 1292 and the project was forgotten. All that remained were the diplomatic presents: English garfalcons flying high over Tabriz and a Persian leopard shivering in a cage in England.

In the fourteenth century European interests in the Mongol Empire diminished. Ghengis Khan's state disintegrated further and the Nestorians were now persecuted. Rabban Sauma's disciple and patriarch, died a hunted man in 1317 and his church was finally wrecked, with the Mongol Empire itself, by Timur.





The Polos brought back precious information about the towns of Kublai's China and the economy of the country. A journey to Karakorum enabled them to gain an understanding of the life of Mongols. Above left: the monster depicted in this scene of men collecting palm wine is from medieval tradition.

Below left: aromatic plants growing on the banks of the Dead Sea.

Above: Tartars using foxes as food. Miniatures. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)

Left: Mongol horsemen. Persian miniature. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)



The emergence of Japan

China provides the pattern of civilisation; the golden age of Japanese literature; the home of Zen Buddhism.

Early Japan

The fact that the early Chinese were not a seafaring people explains the relatively late development of a distinct civilisation in Japan. During the centuries from the Shang to the Han dynasties, while a rich and complex civilisation was emerging in China, the Japanese islands remained isolated from events on the mainland. The people there, closely knit in tight clan organisations and continually at war with the surrounding aborigines, lived their lives by hunting and fishing, without having developed the practice of agriculture. A type of Stone-Age culture existed, traced back to the third millennium B.C., to which the name *Jomon* is given, from the straw rope patterns impressed on the handworked pottery of the period.

From the third century B.C. it was displaced by the more sophisticated Yayoi culture, a name derived from one of the archaeological sites near Tokyo. During the Yayoi period which lasted until the third century A.D., increasing cultural and technological influences from China transformed the Japanese way of life. Archaeological evidence shows that at this time bronze and iron were introduced simultaneously into Japan, most probably from the mainland by way of Korea.

Equally important was the introduction of rice, which led to the development of an agricultural economy. The close communion with nature to be found in an agricultural community, with its collective responses to changes in the weather, encouraged Shinto beliefs. The simple respect and homage rendered to the forces of good and evil in wind and rain, mountains and sea was built up into a religious outlook in which human behaviour was subordinated to Shinto—'the way of the gods'.

These Shinto beliefs, which were later to be associated with emperor worship, with a significant effect on modern Japanese nationalism, influenced conceptions of government from early times.

In the second century A.D. a struggle for supremacy between the various tribes resulted in a confederation of states under Queen Himiko of the Yamato tribe. She apparently lived in seclusion in a fine palace

surrounded by a thousand female slaves—a religious leader who transmitted the words of the gods.

A distinctive practice which emerged in the late Yayoi period was the custom of burying rulers and nobles in large mounds, or *kofun*. Some of these *kofun* were of a considerable size. The largest, that of the emperor Nintoku, is about 1,500 feet long and 120 feet high and is said to be the largest tomb in the world. In these tombs mirrors, swords, armour and gold and silver objects have been found buried. It was during this period of the tomb culture of the fourth and fifth centuries that Japan began to emerge as a unified state from the conglomeration of tribes on the Yamato plain.

The influence of China

Between the fifth and the seventh centuries the Yamato court established its position and continued the process of unifying the country. The surrounding areas were pacified, irrigation projects were carried out and the influence of the independent clan leaders was gradually suppressed. Very little is known of this early development because it was not until the fifth century that a written language emerged in Japan. Such records as exist are preserved in the Chinese annals and, to the Chinese, Japan was known as *Wa*—'the land of the barbarians'.

However, Chinese cultural influences soon flowed into the country. During this and the succeeding Nara period the influx of Chinese ideas transformed every facet of Japanese life. The Japanese rulers, dazzled by the achievement of the Han and then the T'ang dynasties, modelled the government on Chinese patterns. Chinese conceptions of law, institutional procedures and means of political control were eagerly adopted and used to break down the power of the independent nobles. It is also true that Chinese artistic and literary trends enjoyed great popularity.

In fact, the acceptance of Chinese philosophical patterns did much to bring about the development of a conscious Japanese literary tradition. The *Kojiki* and the *Nihon Shoki*, which form the basis of the historical chronicles of Japan, made their appearance at this time.

During the Nara and Heian periods women played an active part in Japanese society. However, with the growth of feudalism their status was reduced. In comparison with European feudalism, the cult of Bushido, the 'Way of the Warrior', had no concept of chivalry toward women. They were forbidden to act and men took the parts of women as, for instance, the actor (above) who is playing the part of a peasant woman.

Left: a woman with a child on her back. (Musée Guimet, Paris.)



Buddhism and feudalism

Between the eighth and the twelfth centuries these formative influences were absorbed and a distinctive Japanese culture emerged. The impact of Buddhism in particular transformed the country. Initially, there had been some fear of offending against the old gods and the religion was resisted. A violent struggle over this issue had taken place between two clans, the Soga and the Mononobe. After Soga's victory in 587 a Buddhist temple, the Asuka monastery, was erected at the Yamato court. The influence of Buddhism then spread rapidly and the period is sometimes called the Asuka age.

At the end of the century Prince Shotoku, who was renowned for his piety, gave a

further impulse to the spread of the religion. He wrote commentaries on the *Lotus Sutra*, built impressive temples and made it the official creed. As a result, in Japan as elsewhere the seventh and eighth centuries were the golden age of Buddhist activity. A permanent capital, closely modelled on Chang-an, the capital of T'ang China, was established at Nara, from which this period is named.

However, Buddhism in Japan developed characteristics which did not emerge in China. As the monasteries grew in strength they built up private armies of monks and meddled in politics. In 764 this activity came to a climax when the monk Dokyo seized power, became the grand minister of state, and aspired to the throne. Only with great difficulty was his power broken by the aristocracy and Dokyo banished.

This usurpation had far-reaching effects. In 794 the emperor Kammu, who was determined to break free of the grip of the monasteries, decided to leave Nara and to set up a new capital at Heiankyo, the site of present-day Kyoto. However, in the Heian period (794-1185) the Yamato court was increasingly involved in the complexities of Japanese politics. It became impossible for the throne to control the nobles who built up private forces and supported the rise of a warrior class.

Left and below: the emphasis on physical prowess in early Japan encouraged the warriors to compete against each other on horseback or in unarmed combat. Schools were founded to teach these skills. In particular, a style of sumo wrestling became popular, in which giant contestants attempted to overthrow each other. One such wrestler is shown on the left, with his professional name Yasojima, meaning 'Many Islands', depicted on his apron. (Musée Guimet, Paris.)





From early times the warrior tradition had been strong in Japan. The constant struggles between the warring clans, the forcible suppression of the aboriginal tribes and the stirring accounts of the unification of the country preserved in the Japanese tradition, subscribed to the supremacy of the warrior.

In Heian times, the fiercely loyal bands of armed retainers built up a rigorous code of conduct and emerged as a distinctive class, the *bushi*. By the tenth century each noble was surrounded by a band of devoted followers. The term *samurai*, which comes from the verb *samurau*, 'to stand by the side of', vividly illustrates their status and function.

One of the first of the families to rise to prominence in this struggle of the aristocracy was the Fujiwara. For over a century they exercised dictatorial control over the court, until their strength was broken by the emperor Gosanjo when he ascended the throne in 1068.

To raise the prestige of the imperial court, the emperor Gosanjo introduced a measure which was to have far-reaching consequences in Japanese politics during the succeeding century. This was the *insei* system, by which the emperor left the throne to a puppet and retired to a monastery, while in reality maintaining control of affairs. The aim was to free the emperor

from politics, but the result was otherwise.

In a short while a growing number of cloistered emperors added to the difficulties of the situation, matching themselves against one another and depending on the nobility for support. In this *insei* period the dynamic feudal tendencies of the powerful aristocratic families, supported by their samurai followers, carried Japan into one of the most dramatic phases of its development.

The military struggle was decided between the houses of Minamoto, or Genji, who had risen to prominence as vassals of the Fujiwara and the Heike, also called Taira, who were favoured by the court. The bitter and protracted wars between the Taira and Minamoto dominated twelfth-century politics. At first triumphant, the Taira were then isolated and defeated by Minamoto-no Yoritomo, to whom the court gave administrative control of the eastern half of the country. From this centre, Yoritomo built up his power with the help of his younger brother, Yoshitsune. In 1185 he annihilated the Taira at the great naval battle of Dan-no-ura.

Literature flourishes

During the Nara period a growing awareness of a distinctive cultural identity led to an interest in literary activity in Japan. However, free expression was restricted by

Left: Yoshitsune, the younger brother of Yoritomo, founder of the Kamakura shogunate, engaged in combat with the warrior monk, Musashibo Benkei, on the Gojo bridge in Kyoto. After this famous encounter Benkei became a retainer of Yoshitsune.

Below: Samurai were impoverished aristocrats recruited by the great nobles to officer their private armies. (Musée Guimet, Paris.)



the lack of a Japanese script, which did not emerge until after the fifth century. Writings were expressed in Chinese or rendered phonetically in Chinese characters. The early Japanese historical chronicles, the *Kojiki* (712) and the *Nihon shoki* (720), are presented in these forms.

Despite this difficulty, the urge to express themselves poetically overcame the absence of a written language. In the Nara era an anthology was compiled of more than 4,000 poems. This was the *Man'yōshū* or the 'Collection of Myriad Leaves', which preserved the rough songs of peasants working in the fields as well as lilting poems to nature by aristocratic court ladies.

In the Heian period the spoken language broke free of the rigid Chinese characters. A simplified form of them was adopted, the *katakana*, and the cursive *hiragana*, thus creating a distinctive Japanese script. With this impulse, a rich body of poetry had emerged by the mid-ninth century, introspective in character and revealing a supreme awareness of man's closeness to, and dependence on, nature.

During the following century there were rapid developments in a wide variety of literary forms. The lead in this activity was taken by the leisured aristocracy at the imperial court, who for their subject matter turned frequently to their own social situation and to the delicate and complicated relationships of their class.

In this way a number of outstanding *monogatari* or prose narratives appeared, many of which were written by gifted and cultured court ladies. One of the most famous of these works was the *Tale of Genji* by the Lady Murasaki. This lengthy novel recreated the life and exploits of Prince Genji with a wealth of intimate detail and affectionate sympathy. An equally unforgettable work, also by a woman, was the *Pillow Book of Sei Shōnagon*, which appeared about A.D. 1000.

Legends, folktales and travel diaries also date from this period. These traveller's accounts provide valuable descriptive information on conditions in the country. They had their origin in the requirement placed on the nobility to attend at the various administrative centres of feudal Japan.

One of the most popular themes in early Japanese literature was the tragedy and triumph of the country's history. Tales of battles, which recalled the heroic exploits and the relentless struggles of the warring clans, were told and retold by successive writers, creating a tradition of dedication and personal self-sacrifice which added to the prestige of the warrior class.

These tales reached their greatest output during the feudal period of the Kamakura shogunate. In time stories were produced which recounted with a wealth of imaginative detail the series of events and wars which had led to the triumph of the Mina-

moto over the Taira. They had an immense popular appeal, and the practice developed in which they were chanted, accompanied by a lute, to groups of listeners.

By the fourteenth century dramatists such as Kanami Kiyotsuga (1333–84) and his son, Zeami Motokiyo (1363–1443), had fused the Japanese genius for poetic expression to dramatic representations of these time-honoured epics by creating the repertoire of *No* plays of Japan.

The Kamakura Shogunate

The triumph of the Minamoto over the Taira marked the end of the formative period in Japanese history and ushered in a new era which looked forward to the modern age.

For centuries, as the centralised state had slowly emerged, the clans had struggled for political control, both among themselves and against the emperor who represented the imperial government. Minamoto Yoritomo's victory over the Taira resolved both these issues.

Yoritomo was aware that he owed his success to the eastern barons. Consequently, after his victory, he did not try to take over the court at Kyoto. Instead, he remained in the east where he set up an independent government at Kamakura. He carried out military and economic reforms, established a means of keeping the unruly vassals under control and took over the administration of civilian justice. A new type of government emerged, which was apparently of a temporary nature because of the military demands of the moment. It was given the name *bakufu* or 'tent headquarters'.

However, Yoritomo soon consolidated his position in the east in a decisive way. He crushed a rebellion headed by his younger brother Yoshitsune, who had been encouraged to revolt by the ex-emperor, Go-Shirakawa. He also insisted on establishing stewards in the provincial administrative systems. As these were drawn from his own followers the measure extended his personal control over the country. Against the objections of the ex-emperor, he then claimed the title of *taishogun* or 'barbarian-subduing Generalissimo'.



The brilliant prose narratives of women writers such as *Sei Shonagon* and the *Lady Murasaki* in the Fujiwara era of the early eleventh century are outstanding examples of Japanese literature.

Left: a woman writing on a scroll. (Musée Guimet, Paris.)

The interest which the Japanese had in ceremonial and music led them to borrow heavily from the Chinese. Even today, T'ang music, known in Japan as *gagaku*, is performed at the imperial court in its original form.

Right: a group of court ladies sit warming themselves at charcoal braziers, listening to one of their number play the three-stringed *samisen*. (Musée Guimet, Paris.)



The Kamakura shogunate, which evolved in this way, had at the end of the twelfth century established a system of government which persisted in Japan until the nineteenth century. The emperor and his court were allowed to continue as the titular government at Kyoto, but the real power was maintained by the Bakufu at Kamakura. The title of shogun, which Yoritomo had forced from the court, ensured that this military power was not arbitrary but dele-

gated by the emperor, on whose behalf all decisions were technically made.

The first test of the shogunate came in A.D. 1199 when Yoritomo died. His two capable brothers and his uncle had earlier been put to death. His inexperienced young son, Yoriie, succeeded, but political power at Kamakura soon passed to the Hojo family of Yoritomo's wife. At the same time, the vigorous and capable ex-emperor, Go-Toba, made an unsuccessful attempt to

regain control of the country in the Jokyu war of 1221. The Hojo resisted this challenge and maintained the Kamakura system for over a century.

The strength of the system lay in the high sense of personal loyalty which was characteristic of feudal Japan. This was the age of the warrior whose life centred on his rigid code of conduct and concept of loyalty to his feudal lord. *Hara-kiri*, suicide by disembowelment, appears as a practice at this time.



The Mongol invasions

The emphasis on military efficiency which dominated the outlook of the Japanese during the thirteenth century was to prove their salvation. In A.D. 1259 the Mongol armies of Genghis Khan, under his grandson Kublai, swept over China and established the Yuan dynasty. Kublai Khan then sent envoys to the surrounding states with peremptory demands that they should submit to his rule. The Japanese rejected him and Kublai twice attempted to invade the country.

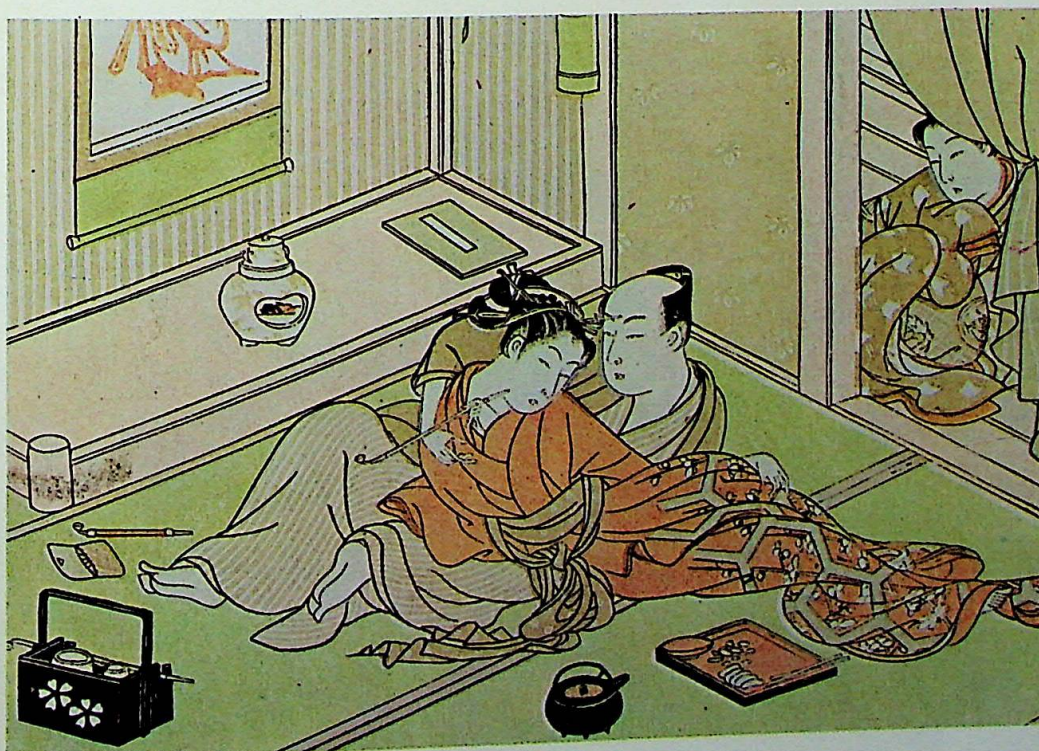
In the first invasion of 1274 the Mongols sent an armada of 900 Korean ships carrying over 25,000 warriors to attempt a landing at Hakata bay in Kyushu. A fierce battle followed between the Japanese warriors and the Mongol troops, which ended when a storm arose causing the battered invaders to re-embark and flee to Korea.

A second and larger expedition was sent in 1281. This time the Mongols massed a huge army of about 140,000 men, which was



Below: a love of ceremonial was also to be found in the amusement quarters, where social and cultural contact between the sexes was possible in a way denied by correct society. (Musée Guimet, Paris.)

Left: a Kabuki actor in the part of a Samurai. (Musée Guimet, Paris)



A map of Japan. Isolated by geography from the development of civilisation on the mainland of China, Japan retained a primitive Stone-Age culture until the beginning of the first century A.D. when Chinese influence, which was responsible for the introduction of bronze and iron and of rice-growing, began to effect a radical transformation in the Japanese way of life.



carried over in Korean and Sung ships. The Japanese meanwhile had feverishly put up a protective stone wall around Hakata bay. When the Mongols arrived there was a desperate battle over the wall which lasted for two months. For a second time, the Japanese were saved by a typhoon, which destroyed the enemy fleet.

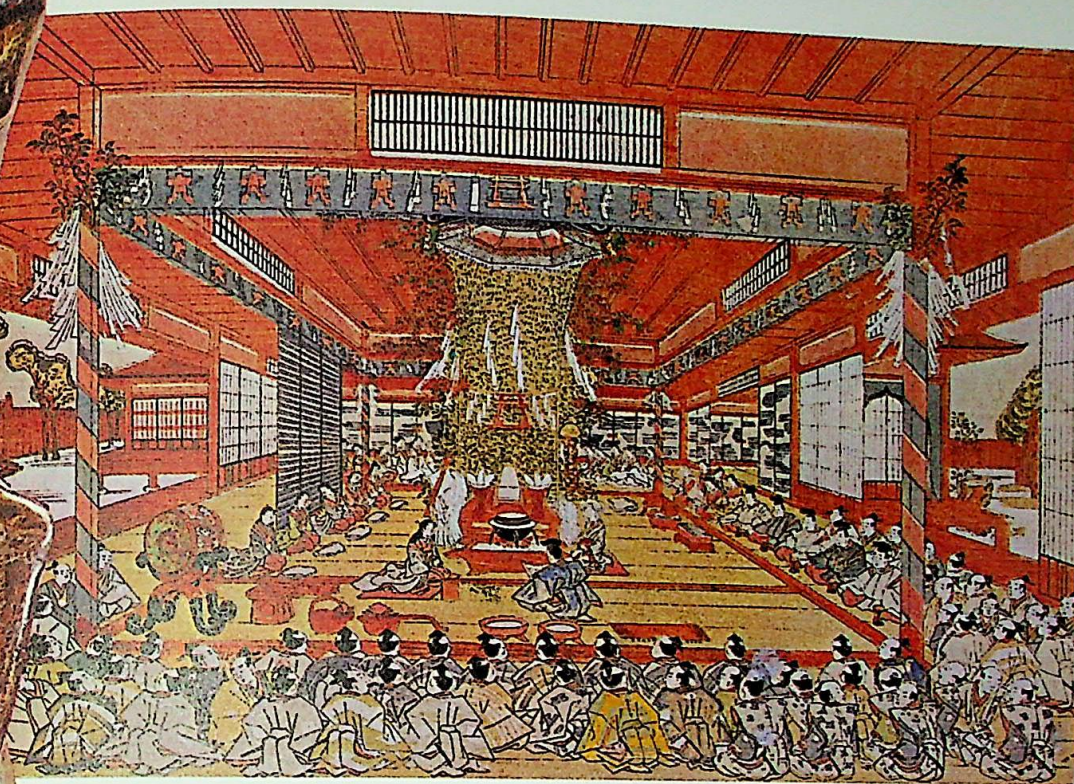
The revival of Buddhism

An extensive revival of Buddhism occurred during the early Kamakura period. This was partly due to the disturbed political situation of the country. A general feeling of insecurity encouraged speculation on the transience of life. It also drew its support from the simple faith and religious fervour of the samurai warriors.

In the feudal period of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries Buddhism became less a philosophical creed and more the religion of the emerging lower classes. To an increasing extent the faith was practised and taught by the common people.

A number of sects emerged, and each in turn attempted to achieve a simpler and more direct message. One such was the *Jodo* or 'Pure Land' sect, taught by the monk, Honen. Honen's teaching described paradise as the pure land which could be attained merely by rejecting the Buddha's name. His disciple Shinran (1173–1262) simplified the





teaching even further. He believed that a single sincere appeal to Buddha was sufficient to ensure salvation. On the other hand, the monk, Ippen (1239–89), practised his faith and gained a following by singing and dancing around the countryside. In his view a man could be sure of salvation only by continually reciting Buddha's name.

Another group led by the monk, Nichiren (1222–82), placed their faith in the Lotus Sutra, and devotees were taught to chant the phrase 'Hail to the Sutra of the Lotus of the Wonderful Law'. The simplicity of these teachings and the promise of direct salvation appealed to the common people, and many of these sects have persisted to the present day.

The most significant branch of Buddhist teaching to develop in the Kamakura period was the Zen or meditation school. The sect, which had first developed in Sung China, stressed the importance of personal discipline and control through calm meditation. Its emphasis on the importance of personal character and spiritual self-searching gave it a widespread appeal among the warrior class. When Zen Buddhism was introduced into Japan by the monk Eisai in 1191, he settled at Kamakura, where he rapidly obtained the support of the shogunate. Zen Buddhism subsequently reached the peak of its achievement in Japan during the fourteenth-sixteenth centuries.

During the shogunate of Kamakura, Buddhist piety reached its peak of intensity in Japan.

Left: a seventh-century statue Maitreya, one of the bodhisattvas sent for the salvation of men. Korea. (Museum of Fine Arts, Ruksoo.)

Above: an official of the shogun, whose duty was the surveillance of the provincial nobility.

Above left: a scene in a theatre. (Musée Guimet, Paris.)

Far left: the delicate intimacy of Japanese domestic life is illustrated in these scenes. Daily ablutions were almost a ritual, even amongst the poorer classes. (Musée Guimet, Paris.)

ASIA AND THE MONGOL CONQUESTS

	India	China	Japan	Mongol conquests
1000	Mahmud of Ghazni invades India Rajendra Chola (1014-35)	Reforms of Wang An Shih	Gosanjō emperor (1068) Power of Fujiwara broken	
	The Ghaznevids in the Punjab	Hui Tsung (1101-35) Division of China between the Chin and the Sung	Struggle between the Taira and the Minamoto	Mongol expansion under Genghis Khan
1200	Invasion of India by Muhammad Ghuri		Yorimoto establishes shogunate at Kamakura (1192)	
	Delhi sultanate The Slave dynasty (1206-90) Iltutmish (1211-36) Balban (1266-87) Khalji dynasty (1290-1320)	Peking taken by Genghis Khan (1215) Kublai Khan founds Yuan dynasty Marco Polo in China	Hojo regency Failure of Mongol expeditions (1274-81) Revival of Buddhism	Conquest of central Mongolia, China, and Turkestan Mongols in Persia, Caucasia and southern Russia
1300	Expansion of Delhi sultanate into south India		Overthrow of Hojo regency	
	Tughluq dynasty (1320-1413) Muhammad Tughluq (1325-51) Timur's raid on India (1398)	Ming dynasty founded (1368) Hong Wu (1368-98)	Civil war between the Southern and Northern dynasties	Mongols expelled from southern China
1400				Timur invades Persia, Russia and India
	Sayyid dynasty (1414-51) Lodi dynasty (1451-1526)	Yung Lo (1403-24) Peking becomes the capital (1421)	Muromachi period	Death of Timur (1405)
1500				

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Acknowledgments

9 Geraldine Kenway; 10 Scala; 11 Scala; 19 Josse; 59 J. Webb; 64 Josse; 65 Josse;
 66 Government of India; 69 J. Webb; 71 Left and right, Josse; 73 Josse; 80 Above,
 Brakke-Magnum; 93 Lubchansky; 96-97 Y. Butler; 97 Above, Y. Butler. Right,
 Y. Butler; 98 Y. Butler; 114-115, 115, 116, 116-117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123 Josse.

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